LEADERSHIP IN Dangerous SITUATIONS

A Handbook for the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and First Responders

EDITED BY
Patrick J. Sweeney, Michael D. Matthews, and Paul B. Lester

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ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY

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A Handbook for the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and First Responders

SECOND EDITION

EDITED BY **PATRICK J. SWEENEY, MICHAEL D. MATTHEWS, PAUL B. LESTER, SEAN T. HANNAH,** AND **BRIAN J. REED**

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS
Annapolis, Maryland

Naval Institute Press
291 Wood Road
Annapolis, MD 21402

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LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA
Names: Sweeney, Patrick J. (Patrick John), editor.
Title: Leadership in dangerous situations : a handbook for the armed forces, emergency services, and first responders / edited by Patrick J. Sweeney, Michael D. Matthews, Paul B. Lester, Sean T. Hannah, and Brian J. Reed.
Description: Second edition. | Annapolis, Maryland : Naval Institute Press, [2022] | First edition published in 2011. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2022028369 (print) | LCCN 2022028370 (ebook) | ISBN 9781682478202 (trade paperback) | ISBN 9781682478240 (ebook)
Subjects: LCSH: Leadership—Psychological aspects. | Leadership—Social aspects. | Crisis management.
Classification: LCC HD57.7 .L43 2022 (print) | LCC HD57.7 (ebook) | DDC 658.4/092—dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022028369
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2022028370

♾ Print editions meet the requirements of ANSI/NISO z39.48–1992 (Permanence of Paper).
Printed in the United States of America.

30 29 28 27 26 25 24 23 22 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
First printing

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Foreword to the Second Edition

A DECADE HAS PASSED SINCE the publication of the first edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations.* Leaders continue to face volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous challenges. New York City has endured historic weather events, civil unrest, and a severe budget crisis. Nationally, natural disasters including intense hurricanes, flooding, and massive wildfires stress the capacity of emergency services. Mass shootings at schools and other locations occur at a frightening rate. A condo collapsed in Florida, killing ninety-eight people. Joplin, Missouri, was struck by one of the deadliest tornadoes in recorded history. In Texas, an explosion at a fertilizer plant killed fifteen people and injured more than two hundred. Politically motivated violence threatens the very foundation of democracy. This is all on top of the dangerous situations law enforcement officers, firefighters, and first responders face in the course of their normal day-to-day duties. And over the past two years, all of this has transpired within the context of the deadliest pandemic in more than a century.

Competent leaders of character are needed to successfully deal with these situations. Incorporating feedback from readers of the first edition, this second edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations* includes substantive updates to the original chapters as well as new chapters that further prepare *in extremis* leaders to prevail in daunting conditions. Some of the new chapters assist senior leaders to prepare their organizations and people to face the unique challenges of operating in dangerous situations, fully support them during operations, and assist them in making meaning out of and learning from their experiences. Leaders at all levels will find this expanded scope invaluable in preparing for the unpreparable.

The unifying theme in this book is that the skills and character strengths needed to lead others in harm's way can be learned and developed. Leaders can hone their own skills by thoroughly absorbing the lessons contained in this book. They can develop their character strengths through self-awareness, purposeful engagement, and support from others. These chapters are written by proven *in extremis* leaders and experts who have devoted their careers to building our understanding of what it takes to lead others when lives are on the line. Moreover, by taking these lessons to heart, leaders can envision strategies to nurture and develop others in their organization to improve their own leadership skills.

In short, this book provides the blueprint for what it takes to lead and inspire others under the direst of circumstances.

Leaders in dangerous situations cannot know exactly what challenges we will face, only that such challenges will inevitably present themselves, usually when we least expect them. This second edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations* is an invaluable guide to improving leadership skills and preparing for the worst and is a must read for anyone who leads others where danger lurks.

Salvatore J. Cassano
Fire Commissioner, City of New York

Preface

AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT ACROSS THE GLOBE, teams of people are responding to situations where lives are on the line. These situations include natural disasters, war, accidents, criminal incidents, fire, and man-made disasters of various sorts. The collapse of a condominium in Florida in June 2021 illustrates the challenges such situations present. The collapse was unexpected. First responders had no time to prepare for a tragedy of this magnitude. In a matter of moments they went from a routine work shift to responding to the biggest disaster in their professional experience. The psychological toll among leaders and followers alike was high. The search and rescue, and later the recovery operations, extended for many days. Media and public scrutiny was intense. Decisions were debated and second-guessed. Leaders had to coordinate the efforts of multiple local, state, and federal agencies. Time was of the essence as families of missing people anxiously awaited word about their loved ones. Politicians from all levels visited the site and offered their views and opinions on national and world media. Social media exploded with information and misinformation about the collapse. Under these conditions, competent leadership was essential.

The first edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations: A Handbook for the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and First Responders* was published in 2011. Its purpose was to provide those who lead and serve others in high-stakes situations such as the Florida condominium collapse with practical guidance on how to inspire and influence others to accomplish their mission while protecting their well-being. The book addressed the unique psychological, social, and organizational demands leaders must meet to operate effectively in dangerous situations. Toward that end, the first edition focused on how leaders in these daunting situations could strengthen their personal resilience and psychological hardiness, leadership techniques, and strategies to influence their followers; and how to build organizations that respond to dangerous situations in a timely and effective manner. The book's primary audience was frontline and mid-level leaders. We paired experienced and proven practitioners with notable scholars to write each chapter with a focus on practical application.

In the second edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations*, we have updated all the original chapters with new and relevant examples and current research findings. In

addition, we have added new chapters to fill gaps in the first edition and to address the leadership challenges senior leaders face. Senior leaders play a significant role in shaping organizations and their culture. They must navigate social and political issues to ensure that their people are trained and have the resources to accomplish their mission with the least risk to their well-being. There are new chapters on character development, ethical decision making, leadership styles and approaches for dangerous situations, employing disciplined initiative, leading task force and cross-functional teams, operating in dynamic and complex social and political environments, contingency planning for dangerous situations, and the art of incident command. The intent of the second edition is to update current knowledge regarding how to lead others in dangerous situations and expand its applicability at all levels of the organization.

The knowledge and wisdom incorporated into this book are the result of long and hard-won experience leading others in the direst circumstances. Whether you are a military platoon leader or a commanding general, a firefighter or a fire battalion chief, a police officer on a beat or the chief of the department, we hope that this second edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations* will help you do your job more effectively, work better with other responders and other agencies, and remain personally strong and resilient. The editors and authors who contributed to this revised edition did so as a gift to their professions and to the men and women who serve their countries and communities, without financial gain. The editors and chapter authors thank you for your service. What you do saves lives and makes the world a better place. Keep leading the way!

Acknowledgments

WE WANT TO THANK the contributors to this volume, who are collectively the top thinkers in the theory and practice of leading in dangerous contexts. Their professionalism, leadership expertise, teamwork, and dedication to support those who serve their countries and communities in harm's way made this book possible. We are grateful to the Naval Institute Press for recognizing the value of and supporting the publication of the revised edition. Special thanks to Susan Brook for her professionalism, patience, and expertise in guiding us through this revision.

CHAPTER 1

Leading in Dangerous Contexts
An Overview

PATRICK J. SWEENEY, SEAN T. HANNAH, BRIAN J. REED,
MICHAEL D. MATTHEWS, AND PAUL B. LESTER

PURPOSE

THE IDEA FOR THIS BOOK EVOLVED from the editors' experiences and research in dangerous contexts and in directing West Point's course in combat leadership. We discovered the leadership literature was lacking a comprehensive guide that outlines how and why leadership is different in dangerous contexts; how to prepare leaders and followers for the unique challenges of operating in these contexts and recover following exposure to adversity; how to lead when group members are facing danger; and how to leverage organizational systems to facilitate group members' resilience in handling the potential adversities associated with these contexts. The intent of this book is to fill that gap. The book is a comprehensive and easily understandable guide, backed by research and best practices, to prepare the brave men and women who risk their lives to serve the public, their teams, and their organizations for the unique psychological, social, and organizational challenges of leading and operating in dangerous contexts.

The world has changed since the first edition was published in 2011. Two decades of protracted war in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended, civil unrest is growing across the United States and elsewhere, devastating natural disasters are increasingly common, and a global pandemic covers the planet. The need for effective leadership in dangerous contexts is growing concomitantly with the frequency, scope, and impact that such dangerous contexts are having on our lives. This book is intended to serve as a resource for those who lead in this world.

ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK

The organizing framework for the book entails consideration of the unique demands of operating in dangerous situations at three levels within an organization (individual,

LEVELS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	TEMPORAL PHASES OF OPERATIONS		
	PREPARATION	EXECUTION	RECOVERY
Individual	• Understand and accept the threat to individual physical and psychological well-being • Gain expertise in the skills necessary to perform duties • Hone problem-solving and ethical decision-making skills • Develop superior stress management skills • Strengthen your character to perform duties and live with integrity • Develop courage to face physical threats or stand up for what is right • Master self-management to control emotions and behavior • Develop an array of coping strategies for promoting resilience • Achieve and maintain superb physical fitness • Develop good social skills to effectively build relationships with diverse people • Develop a genuine sense of caring for teammates, the organization, and the people you serve	• Apply expertise in stressful situations • Execute duties in an ethical manner • Demonstrate the ability to adapt to changing circumstances • Manage your thoughts, emotions, and behavior while under extreme stress • Sustain your mental sharpness throughout the operation	• Reflect upon, learn, and take action to improve from your experience • Make meaning out of your experience and integrate it into your life • Provide social support for teammates
Interpersonal	• Build trusting relationships with team members, supervisor, and key stakeholders (social cohesion) • Establish your credibility with teammates • Learn your teammates' and supervisor's strengths and weaknesses • Establish task cohesion	• Maintain team integrity while executing missions • Ensure mission gets completed while caring for and supporting each other, key stakeholders, and the people you serve	• Encourage teammates to seek each other to help understand a dangerous context experience • Provide social support, as needed • Seek feedback from teammates to improve
Team/Organization	• Shape a positive, values-based culture • Establish a psychologically safe climate to promote learning • Create ideological cohesion or ethos • Train people to meet the demands of operating in a dangerous context • Establish a system to ensure continuous learning • Create social support network for family members • Empower people to take disciplined initiative • Establish a climate that it is acceptable to seek social support or mental health, if needed	• Plan and execute all missions to get results with integrity (e.g., aligned with organizational values) while minimizing risk to life • Empower people to be innovative and adaptive in the execution of their duties	• Ensure the team/organization learns and changes based on experiences • Foster team meaning making of experiences in dangerous contexts • Provide social support and/or mental health resources, if needed • Honor teammates who have been killed or injured in the line of duty • Ensure family members are taken care of

FIGURE 1.1. Organizing Framework Outlining the Unique Challenges of Leading in Dangerous Contexts

interpersonal relationships, and team/organization) and in three temporal phases of operations (preparation, execution, and recovery) (see figure 1.1). A map of the unique challenges across that temporal span of operations provides leaders with insights into what they need to do to prepare themselves and, most important, to engineer the team's/organization's culture and policies, procedures, practices, processes, systems, and structure (P4S2s) to prepare the organization and its members to handle the demands of operating in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. The preparation phase sets the foundation for effective performance and resilience when facing setbacks. The framework outlines actions leaders can implement to ensure the team/organization efficiently achieves its mission while maintaining members' well-being. Finally, this framework assists leaders in understanding the importance of recovery operations to prepare people and equipment for the next mission and explains how to harvest lessons learned to improve, and how to understand, make meaning from, and positively grow from experiences in dangerous contexts.

THE TEAM

International scholars and practitioners from the military, law enforcement, fire services, and rescue organizations have teamed together to address how to overcome the unique challenges that dangerous contexts place on leaders. The book is written foremost for the practitioner, in the practitioner's language. Each chapter integrates theory and research with practical experience to address the unique challenges these leaders face. The blending of practical experience, theory, and empirical research comes together to form a guide to master the challenges of leading people when lives are in the balance.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BOOK?

Whether you are a young leader preparing for war, a seasoned commander with multiple combat tours, a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team leader, an emergency medical technician (EMT) supervisor, a first-line supervisor of a law enforcement patrol unit, a lieutenant responsible for a shift of firefighters, or a police or fire chief, you lead people in contexts where life-and-death decisions are common. If you are a novice, you are likely wondering, "How will leading in these situations be different?" A more experienced leader has probably asked, "Why is leading in these situations different?" and "How can I use team or organization systems to prepare my people to handle the challenges of operating in dangerous situations?" Beyond providing you—the leader—with a better understanding of what is required to lead in dangerous contexts, the contributing authors delve into the psychological, social, and organizational factors that can impact your ability to lead, your followers' ability to perform, and your organization's ability to accomplish the mission. You should take away an understanding of how leading in dangerous contexts is different from leading in contexts where lives are not on the line. But you should also finish this book with a deeper understanding of *why* it differs, *where* commonalities occur,

and—perhaps more important—*how* to prepare yourself to lead and your organization to perform in dangerous contexts.

While written for practitioners, this book can also be a resource for scholars who want to conduct research on leadership in dangerous contexts. Specifically, the book should provide scholars who have not personally been exposed to extreme contexts with insights into the lived experiences of those who have. It should also familiarize them with some of the concepts, frameworks, challenges, and opportunities most relevant to leading in danger.

WHAT ARE DANGEROUS CONTEXTS?

We define "dangerous contexts" as those highly dynamic and unpredictable environments where leaders and group members must routinely engage in actions that place their physical and psychological well-being at risk to accomplish the organization's objectives, and wherein failure has the potential for catastrophic consequences for both the organization and the people it serves.[1] When operating in a dangerous context, group members perceive, experience, or expect a threat to their well-being while executing their duties; and they understand the potential drastic consequences associated with failure to perform their duties or accomplish the organization's objectives. For instance, each time police officers respond to a call for assistance, they can reasonably expect some potential threat to their well-being. Therefore, most police forces require their officers to wear body armor and body cameras. Furthermore, if police officers fail to answer or properly handle calls for assistance, lawlessness may ensue, placing them, other officers, and members of the community at risk.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

The chapters are organized in three sections: Enhancing One's Psychological Body Armor; Influencing When People Are in Harm's Way; and Building the Organization.

SECTION ONE: ENHANCING ONE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL BODY ARMOR

The first section addresses the unique psychological skills and states leaders need in order to function effectively in dangerous, chaotic, and dynamic situations. Topics such as enhancing character development, intuitive and ethical decision making, courage, stress management, promoting resilience and post-adversity growth, and assisting the group in making meaning out of experiences are addressed in this section (see figure 1.1).

In chapter 2, Andrew Farina and Mike Matthews explore the foundational concept of character. They take a strengths-based approach to defining character, which implies that leaders can develop their character through purposeful action. They provide leaders with simple and effective ways to assess and develop their own character strengths and those of their teammates. They go on to address techniques leaders can use to shape a positive organizational culture that promotes the development of members' character, and end by addressing likely threats to character and how to counter them.

Joe Doty, Steve Ingalls, Joe Thomas, Matt Lewis, and Steve Cook cover the fundamentals of ethical decision making in dangerous contexts in chapter 3, using Rest's simple model to explore the steps involved in the process of ethical decision making and action. In the judgment step of this model, the authors embed a systematic model for identifying and framing ethical dilemmas, how to choose the most ethical response, and how to take ethical action. The chapter also outlines the challenges that can bias ethical decision making or preclude ethical action as well as what leaders can do to counter these challenges.

Paul Lester and Cynthia Pury introduce the concept of courage in chapter 4, using the compelling story of Hugh Thompson's actions at My Lai as an example. The chapter illustrates simple yet effective actions leaders can take to build their own and their group members' courage to meet the fears and stressors of operating in dangerous environments and offers guidelines for leaders to build their followers' courage to meet the threats of the dangerous context while executing their duties in an ethical manner.

In chapter 5, James Ness, Lolita Burrell, Andrea Peters, Denise Jablonski-Kaye, Isabell Obigt, and David Lam review stress: the sources of stress in dangerous contexts, how stress comes about, and how various levels of stress impact performance. The heart of this chapter is the enlightening discussion of techniques leaders can use to manage high levels of stress and still function effectively. Once leaders understand how stress management techniques work, they can go on to create stress management plans for their teams and organizations.

Joseph Pfeifer, James Merlo, and Michael Matthews provide an insightful discussion on intuitive decision making for dangerous contexts in chapter 6, using vignettes and examples to outline the key components of intuitive decision making and how it combines with more deliberate rational decision making. They go on to discuss how leaders can improve their decision-making capabilities under stress while mitigating potential barriers. Leaders will find this chapter invaluable for improving their ability to make effective decisions under extreme stress.

In chapter 7, Hubert Annen, Donna Brazil, and Bob Delaney address how leaders can promote and enhance individual psychological resilience using some of the simple evidence-based tools used in military and police resilience-building programs. Understanding how to build individual resilience in themselves and their people is an essential skill for leaders in dangerous situations because it enhances individual and team performance while protecting psychological well-being.

Leading to mitigate post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and promote post-traumatic growth is the subject of chapter 8. Joseph Geraci, Nicole Bulanchuk, Paula Ryszkiewicz, Matthew Goldsmith, Jacqueline Thompson, and Mike Baker discuss the concept of post-traumatic stress disorder, address the factors that contribute to PTSD, provide realistic expectations about the probability of experiencing this disorder, and offer steps leaders can take to mitigate it and promote post-traumatic growth. Their leadership checklist is an insightful guide to actions leaders can take before, during, and after traumatic events to bolster resilience and mitigate PTSD.

In chapter 9, which concludes the first section, Walter Sowden, Michael Hobbs, and Kimberly Defiori offer practical examples and stories to illustrate the importance and the process of meaning making. They introduce the concept of regulatory flexibility, which proposes that leaders need to have an array of coping strategies and know which ones to deploy to make meaning in the adjustment-after-adversity process. The chapter concludes with tips and tools for dangerous-context leaders to enhance the meaning-making processes necessary for resilience, psychological and physical well-being, growth from adversity, and character development.

SECTION TWO: INFLUENCING WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN HARM'S WAY

The second section of the book addresses the unique social and psychological challenges of leading in dangerous contexts. Readers will learn theories and techniques for building strong teams, earning trust, and exercising influence at a level that gets group members to step beyond individual needs to accomplish the mission and promote the welfare of the group. This section highlights the importance of leaders investing in building good-quality relationships throughout the organization, genuinely caring for and protecting group members' welfare, seeking group members' input on decisions, and exercising values-based leadership. When peoples' lives and well-being are in the balance, relationships and leaders' credibility (competence, character, and care) assume far greater importance.

In chapter 10, Patrick Sweeney, Kurt Dirks, David Sundberg, Paul Lester, and Rock Stevens discuss trust development and the link between trust and influence. They present the individual, relationship, organization, and context (IROC) model of trust relationships along with practical techniques leaders can use to enhance trust. At the heart of the IROC model is the proposition that trust is necessary and essential to influence group members, particularly when they are to risk their lives to accomplish the mission. This chapter provides leaders with the knowledge, model, and practical techniques needed to build trust at the high levels necessary to lead in dangerous contexts.

Techniques for building high-performing and resilient teams are the subject of chapter 11. Stephen Zaccaro, Eric Weis, Joanna Zakzewski, and Rita Hilton provide leaders with a detailed guide on how to build strong, resilient, and effective teams. They use a compelling vignette to introduce the concept of team viability, defined as how strongly committed members are to work together and can sustain their ability to do so effectively. Team viability is grounded in cohesion, trust, and collective efficacy (confidence in the team), and the authors offer suggestions to enhance social and task cohesion within their organizations. The authors go on to discuss how leaders can build cognitive, social, and emotional resilience in their teams to meet the unique psychological and social demands associated with dangerous contexts.

In chapter 12, Brian Reed, Chris Midberry, Jim Roussell, and Jason Toole address morale, the essential intangible of a group. Also known as esprit de corps, morale is the

spirit of the unit and the indicator of its social well-being. Morale infuses group members with the motivation to endure extreme hardships and overcome insurmountable odds to complete the organization's mission. The authors examine the concept of morale using vignettes and discuss how to assess it. Most of the chapter is devoted to practical suggestions on how to build and sustain this critical intangible.

In chapter 13, Bruce Avolio and Harold Scoggins examine the concept of developmental readiness and how it promotes leader development and impacts the application of various leadership styles in dangerous contexts. The authors examine authentic, transformational, and transactional leadership styles and the effectiveness of each in dangerous contexts. Using vignettes and personal experiences, they reinforce the importance of development readiness, the selection of the best leadership style to use for the current situation, and how leaders can enhance developmental readiness within their teams or organizations. The authors conclude the chapter by encouraging leaders to continuously work to enhance their own developmental readiness, build competencies in an array of leadership styles, shape a culture that values initiative and learning, and train their people in tough and realistic conditions.

In chapter 14, Travis Tilman, Andrew Ledford, Brady Dearden, and Sam Benson introduce simple concepts and tools to empower the disciplined initiative that is necessary to operate and adapt in VUCA environments. The authors use vignettes and personal examples to examine the concepts necessary to shape an empowered initiative mindset and establish the climate in the organization to encourage it. They discuss key tools to foster disciplined initiative, such as leader's intent, mission orders, after-action reviews, and back-briefs, and provide examples of how to use them. The authors close with a discussion on steps leaders can take to shape a culture that encourages initiative and learning.

In chapter 15, Bryan Williams, Peter Hudelson, Matt Murphy, and Paul Conrad discuss the concepts and techniques necessary to quickly form and effectively lead task forces or cross-functional teams. They use engaging vignettes to introduce and examine the four key factors needed to effectively lead a task force or cross-functional team: trust, cohesion, alignment, and shared leadership. More and more dangerous-context organizations are adopting such modular or task force approaches to tailor units to meet the specific needs of a given situation, so understanding how to form and lead task force and cross-functional teams is increasingly important for leaders.

SECTION THREE: BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION

The third section of the book addresses how leaders can leverage the team's or organization's culture, personnel selection system, leader development system, strategic planning process, and operational procedures to enhance effectiveness in mission completion, enhance adaptability and resilience, promote learning, and bolster the well-being of their people (see figure 1.1).

In Chapter 16, Donald Horner, Luann Pannell, Dennis Yates, and Ruben Lopez address the importance of creating an organizational culture for leading and performing in dangerous contexts. After examining the concept of organizational culture, the authors discuss the important mindsets, attitudes, and behaviors the culture needs to shape and reinforce in its members the ability to operate in VUCA situations. At the heart of the chapter is the authors' discussion of the practical actions leaders can take to shape a high-performing culture. Understanding how to assess and shape culture is important because it influences the climate for trust, cohesion, and the systems and processes needed to prepare people to operate effectively in dangerous environments.

Chapter 17, written by Ole Boe and Everett Spain, discusses recruitment, assessment, and selection of leaders for dangerous-context missions. The authors examine how various countries assess and select the people who fill the ranks of their elite military forces and explain how generational differences have altered the selection process. Readers gain insights into the critical character traits, cognitive abilities, and physical fitness attributes people need to function effectively in dangerous contexts as well as methods used to assess them. The chapter closes with a review of the U.S. Army's new system to select leaders to command battalions (organizations comprising approximately five hundred people).

In chapter 18, Noel Palmer, Sean Hannah, and David Sundberg provide a framework for developing leaders for dangerous contexts. They outline a five-step leader development process and offer tools and best practices for growing leaders in a systematic and deliberate way. Leaders who follow the principles and guidelines outlined in this chapter will enhance their own and their organizations' ability to develop the specific abilities needed for their unique mission. An effective leader development program is imperative for organizations to ensure that their people are fully prepared to meet the unique demands of operating in dangerous contexts. Thus, this chapter is a must read for all leaders.

Managing today's complicated social and political environment is the topic of chapter 19. George Forsythe, John Halstead, Edward Flynn, Richard Toomey, and M. Linda Hawes explore how leaders can use structure, human resources, political, and symbolic frames to navigate social and political environments. The authors use vignettes to illustrate how various leaders used the frames to understand dynamic social and political situations and to effectively accomplish the mission. Dangerous-context leaders at all levels need to recognize and understand that the means they use to accomplish their mission have significant political and social ramifications. The four frames provide leaders with a practical tool to successfully navigate the complexities of political and social environments.

Sean Hannah, John Vermeesch, David Sundberg, and Christopher Smith in chapter 20 examine the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) and show how it can be applied to any dangerous-context organization. The MDMP is a systematic seven-step

approach to planning operations that ensures that a viable course of action is created to accomplish the mission, identify opportunities and threats, and corresponding contingency plans are created and rehearsed. The authors provide suggestions on how to abbreviate the MDMP when operating in a time-constrained environment. Using the MDMP ensures alignment and provides organizations with the ability to adapt their plans in a dynamic environment.

In chapter 21, Kevin Benson and Dan Cox explore Red Teaming, a method used to help planners think critically about their organization's plans, reduce biases, and anticipate how adversaries are likely to respond or a situation will play out. The authors explain the value of Red Teaming to dangerous-context organizations, then introduce a structured Red Teaming process and link it to the MDMP covered in chapter 20. They conclude the chapter with a discussion of the Red Team process and provide an array of tools for its use. Red Teaming can produce viable courses of action and contingency plans to allow an organization to accomplish its missions with the least risk to its people.

In chapter 22, Michael Butera, Christopher Smith, and James Gagliano explore the art of incident command. The authors review the purpose and evolution of incident command and examine its guiding principles. The heart of the chapter is the practical exploration of leaders' responsibilities and best practices pre-incident, during-incident, and post-incident. Their checklist gives leaders the knowledge to prepare for, execute, and effectively recover from any incident. Dangerous-context leaders at most levels are likely at some point to work with outside agencies to accomplish a mission; thus incident command is an important concept.

In chapter 23, the editors integrate the themes and insights introduced in the book and introduce developmental models to assist both leaders and groups to develop the psychological traits and states needed to meet the unique challenges of operating in dangerous contexts.

We hope you find this book helpful in preparing yourselves and your teams/organizations for the unique demands of leading in dangerous situations. Such leadership is not easy, but it is both important and rewarding. The lessons shared in this book will enable you to plan and make effective decisions, lead with courage and humility, build credibility and influence, remain resilient in the face of adversity, and achieve your mission—and do so with integrity while fostering members' well-being.

NOTE

1. S. T. Hannah, M. Uhl-Bien, B. J. Avolio, and F. L. Cavarretta, "A framework for examining leadership in extreme contexts," *Leadership Quarterly* 20, no. 6 (2009): 897–919; D. Campbell, S. Hannah, and M. Matthews, "Leadership in military and other dangerous contexts: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Military Psychology* 22 (suppl. 1): S2.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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SECTION ONE

ENHANCING ONE'S PSYCHOLOGICAL BODY ARMOR

CHAPTER 2

Character
The Foundation of *in Extremis* Leadership

ANDREW G. FARINA AND MICHAEL D. MATTHEWS

Although it has been over a decade since the operation, the details remain as vibrant in my memory as they did on that Christmas Day. I found myself at an inflection point while lying in a wet irrigation ditch—adrenaline masking any feeling of the cold water saturating my uniform. The operation to capture a known insurgent was not going as planned, even though we had surrounded the target building just minutes earlier. As was typical during the closing days of Operation Iraqi Freedom, my small four-member team was advising a much larger number of Iraqi Security Force (ISF) personnel. When the ISF used a bullhorn to direct the residents of the target building to surrender, the situation shifted from a routine operation to an immediate fight for survival. Bright tracer rounds filled the sky as gunfire erupted from every rooftop in the village. I paused for half a second to note that the bullets looked like fireworks through my night-vision goggles, then snapped back to reality when an ISF member next to me fell to the ground with a bullet through his lower abdomen. The remaining ISF were in disarray and retreated to whatever cover they could find. After I returned fire and jumped into the irrigation ditch to take advantage of the only available cover, the gravity of the situation set in.

I was the senior officer on the ground, and I needed to regain the initiative. We were completely exposed to most of the rooftops in the village. To our rear was a plowed field a few hundred meters long that offered no cover from the gunmen on the rooftops. Between the ditch and the target building was a dirt road that also lacked cover. My radio erupted; our reconnaissance aircraft were reporting armed military-age men on the majority of the roofs completely surrounding our position. Three hundred meters down the road, the locals had placed large crew-served machine guns oriented to provide a clear line of fire along the road that separated us from the target building. The ISF were unorganized, and language barriers between the Iraqis

and Americans prevented rapid joint planning. To make matters worse, the ISF were not trained or equipped for this scenario. We did not have enough U.S. personnel on the ground to establish a foothold and clear the target building unilaterally. I was reluctant to use our heavily armed helicopters to fire on the rooftops because of the number of civilians in each building. These factors prevented us from moving forward. Our exposed flank and rear prevented us from retreating to cover and concealment to regroup the ISF. Complicating the situation, the wounded Iraqi needed to be evacuated soon.

Although several options existed for what could happen next, none of them were good. Decisions are easy when there is a clear black-and-white solution. When all the potential solutions fall into various shades of gray, however, the decision becomes significantly more difficult. Should I assault the building with only four Americans, knowing several armed men were present in the target building? Should I stay in place and wait for the situation to settle down—which would give the enemy gunmen a chance to identify our positions and adjust their fire? Should I use the helicopters to strafe the rooftops, risking the lives of the women and children inside each building? Should I attempt an exfiltration across the field to our rear and attempt to outrun the enemy gunfire? I looked at my senior noncommissioned officer, who could tell I was wrestling with our options. He simply said, "I don't know what we need to do, but I know we can't stay here."

IF YOU LEAD OTHERS IN DANGEROUS SITUATIONS, you can identify with this scenario whether you are a soldier, firefighter, law enforcement officer, or other leader who is responsible for accomplishing a mission in stressful, uncertain, and ambiguous conditions. Sometimes you encounter situations that no amount of training or even previous experiences can fully prepare you for.

An inexperienced leader might perceive this situation as one depending primarily on technical competence. Competence in tactics, techniques, and procedures is indeed necessary in successfully dealing with this and similar situations that *in extremis* leaders face. But to be successful, the leader must first and foremost have the trust of followers. When lives are on the line, nothing is more important than trust.

Trust, as you will read throughout this book, depends on more than technical competence. It also depends on the leader possessing positive strengths of character such as honesty, grit, and genuine caring for subordinates. Like the football coach who masters the Xs and Os of the game but whose character is questionable, a leader with technical competence alone cannot form lasting bonds of trust. Without trust, such leaders will fail. Chapter 10 explores trust in greater depth.

In this chapter we describe character and its central role in leading in dangerous situations. As you read, think about the opening scenario. Reflect on what strengths of

character this team leader needed to accomplish the mission and do it in the right way, consistent with his own values and those of the U.S. Army. He was highly trained and experienced, so assume that once he decided on his course of action, he and his team had the technical competence to execute the mission. Instead, focus on the character strengths that were vital as the leader prepared himself and his team *prior* to the mission, *during* the mission, and *after* the mission. At the end of the chapter, we discuss the multiple strengths of character the team leader needed to prevail. See how many you can identify as you read and learn about the science of character.

DEFINING CHARACTER

Those who work in dangerous situations recognize good character when they see it. The soldier, police officer, or firefighter who does the right thing at the right time, even when others are not watching, is recognized as being of good character. Such people are said to have integrity, and their word is taken at face value. Through their attitudes and actions, they influence others in positive ways. Whether they are in a formal leadership position or not, their peers turn to them as a role model.

Psychologists and other social scientists study character systematically. From this perspective, character includes the moral values and habits of an individual.[1] Professors Michael Matthews of West Point and Richard Lerner of Tufts University define a person with character as one "acting on his or her world in ways that benefit it and, in turn, the world thereby providing benefits to the person."[2]

Using this definition, consider the character of a patrol sergeant in a law enforcement agency. First, the sergeant must act in ways that are ethical and moral. Beliefs and attitudes are not enough—good character requires overt action that supports it. The sergeant must do more than talk the talk, he or she must walk the walk. Second, these ethical and moral actions benefit those around them. Through the sergeant's actions, subordinates and peers are encouraged to demonstrate positive character. Third, the sergeant ultimately benefits from his or her own good character. Such people come to be recognized as trusted leaders and may be promoted to positions of even higher responsibility within their department. In short, their actions are genuine, these actions make those around them better, and ultimately this reinforces their own reputation as a leader of character. Further, and this is important, showing high character is personally rewarding. Stanford psychologist Bill Damon notes, "People who pursue noble purposes are filled with joy, despite the constant sacrifices they feel called upon to make."[3] Readers of this book no doubt can relate to Damon's point.

Character is more than honesty and integrity. While these form the core of good character, there are many different traits and attributes that represent positive character. Psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman studied the world's religions, philosophies, and scientific studies of character and identified twenty-four character strengths that are universally recognized in all nations and cultures. They categorize each of these twenty-four traits into one of six moral virtues. The moral virtue of *Wisdom and*

Knowledge includes the character traits of curiosity, creativity, open-mindedness, love of learning, and perspective. *Courage* includes bravery, persistence, integrity, and zest. *Justice* comprises the traits of teamwork, fairness, and leadership. Capacity to love, kindness, and social intelligence constitute the moral virtue of *Humanity. Temperance* is made up of the individual strengths of forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation. Finally, the virtue of *Transcendence* consists of the strengths of appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality.

The idea that character has many dimensions is important both for your personal development and for that of your subordinates. Learning to recognize these various character attributes and how, where, and when to employ them is an important lesson in this chapter.

ASSESSING CHARACTER

There is a simple and quick online tool for assessing your own character traits. Go to www.viacharacter.org and click the top link to take a free character strengths test (the test is free, but it requires personal information and a log-in). This survey takes about twenty minutes to complete and provides you with a list of your strengths rank-ordered from highest to lowest.

Pay special attention to your five highest strengths. Peterson and Seligman refer to these as your signature strengths. These are character strengths that, more than others, you use to accomplish difficult tasks, overcome adversity, and remain resilient. Reflect on how you use your signature strengths at work and in your off-duty time. You may find it insightful to see if your top strengths are scattered across the six moral virtues or clustered in just one or two of the moral virtues. Becoming aware of these strengths and intentionally employing them is an effective strategy for success and resilience.

It is also useful to examine your five lowest strengths. But keep in mind that this is simply a rank-ordered list. Some people are strong in many of the twenty-four strengths, and their lower strengths are not much weaker than their signature strengths. So do not despair if one of your self-perceived strengths of character is not among your signature strengths or is near the bottom of the ranking. Surveys are not perfect, and your self-perception is probably valid.

Plus, as we will see, not all circumstances call for the same character strengths. The character strengths needed to command firefighters at a major disaster are different from the strengths of character needed to nurture a loving and supportive home environment. Sometimes your signature strengths may not be what is needed to excel and one of your less-used strengths may bubble up instead. Maybe spirituality is not one of your signature strengths, but at certain points in your life it may rise in importance. As the old saying goes, there are no atheists in foxholes.

Every one of us has multiple character strengths. We differ in what these signature strengths are, but we can learn to harness our unique strengths profile to achieve our goals and to persevere in difficult times.

HEAD, HEART, AND GUTS

One way to think about the twenty-four strengths is to categorize them into strengths of the head, strengths of the heart, and strengths of the gut. The hard things you do as a leader in dangerous situations require you to employ strengths of character from each of these categories to succeed. Table 2.1 lists representative strengths of the head, heart, and guts.

Head strengths are the strengths of character that are important in solving problems. Creativity, curiosity, and perspective are examples. This is more than your IQ. Some people with very high IQs cannot function well in tactical situations. Head strengths supplement IQ and allow quick and effective decisions in challenging situations. Through strengths of the head, you acquire greater knowledge. Through training, experience, and reflection you transform this knowledge into wisdom and perspective. Wisdom and perspective allow you to make decisions that address the current tactical situation but that are also consistent with strategic objectives.

Compare how a rookie law enforcement officer may respond to a stressful situation with how a seasoned and (hopefully) wise supervisor will react. In a high-speed pursuit,

TABLE 2.1

Representative Strengths of the Head, Heart, and Guts

Strengths of the Head
• Curiosity
• Love of learning
• Creativity
• Open-mindedness
• Perspective
Strengths of the Heart
• Capacity to love
• Kindness
• Fairness
• Gratitude
• Spirituality
• Forgiveness
• Hope and optimism
• Humility
Strengths of the Gut
• Grit and determination
• Integrity and moral courage
• Self-regulation and self-control
• Bravery
• Leadership

the rookie may focus only on catching the offender, regardless of the danger to self, other officers, or the public. Using strengths of the head, the supervisor can assess the entire situation and make a reasoned decision on whether to continue the pursuit or to call it off. If the rookie officer also possesses character strengths of the head, he or she will learn from this experience and, along with myriad other experiences, build their own wisdom and perspective.

Strengths of the heart include individual character strengths that are fundamental in understanding and relating to others in a genuine way. These include kindness, fairness, and capacity to love. Continuing with a law enforcement example, these strengths are fundamental to the concept of law enforcement as a form of service to others. Listening to and empathizing with victims is critical. A kind word can do much to comfort those in need. Even perpetrators may respond favorably to officers who, through their words and deeds, demonstrate a caring and respectful attitude. Law enforcement officers who understand the importance of strengths of the heart come to be venerated by other officers and members of the community.

Strengths of the gut include bravery, integrity, grit, and determination. Physical bravery—an essential attribute for those leading and working in dangerous situations—is often easier than moral courage—the ability to say and do the right thing no matter the consequences. Sometimes honesty is not easy. Speaking truth to power is difficult. But integrity depends on moral courage. Grit—the ability to pursue and achieve difficult goals no matter how difficult they may be—is also a critical strength of the gut.

Taken together, strengths of the head, heart, and gut empower leaders in dangerous situations and their followers to deal with different types of challenges. Strengths of the head enable good decisions. Strengths of the gut are needed to push forward no matter the difficulties. And strengths of the heart are particularly important in dealing with the aftermath of dangerous situations, whether in providing care and comfort to victims or in dealing with the emotional needs and challenges of fellow operators. Effective *in extremis* leaders cultivate and employ strengths of the head, heart, and gut.

DEVELOPING CHARACTER

While core character attributes, good or bad, are initially formed in childhood and adolescence, character continues to be shaped and nurtured throughout life. In adults, character development is often spurred by positive life transitions such as starting a family or taking on a new and demanding job. Life challenges, adversity, and trauma also may set the conditions for character development.

For those who work and lead in dangerous situations, character development can be driven by similar life events, or by training and professional development opportunities. Given the overarching importance of good character in mission effectiveness, *in extremis* leaders should not leave their own or their subordinates' character development to chance.

Developing Character in Others

Rich Lerner identifies three components to character development: (1) skill-building curricula and training, (2) sustained and positive mentoring, and (3) opportunities to lead others.[4] Organizations may use these three components as the basis for a systematic approach to character development for new and existing employees.

At the U.S. Military Academy, positive character is viewed as the foundation of effective leadership. Army officers, like people working in other high-stakes and often dangerous settings, must possess and display positive character in both their work and personal lives. Retired Army lieutenant general Robert Caslen, who served as the 59th Superintendent of West Point, puts it bluntly: "You can be number one in your class intellectually, but if you fail in character you fail in leadership."[5] If you lead in these situations, you understand his point.

West Point has the luxury of four years and a large budget to develop character among its cadets. Throughout their four years of academic, military, and physical fitness training cadets learn about character through various academic classes, deliberate and continual mentoring by experienced officers, and progressively more responsible leadership positions within the Corps of Cadets. To graduate, receive a bachelor of science degree, and receive a commission as Army officers they must demonstrate that they are of the highest character. Those who fail to meet the standard are given remedial education and training or are separated from the academy.

Other organizations may use these three principles of character development to tailor their own character development plan. We use the example of a mid-sized urban police department in the following, although fire departments and other organizations can adopt similar approaches. As you read on, consider how your own organization can employ a skill-building curriculum, mentoring, and systematic leadership opportunities to build positive character.

Skill-Building Curriculum

Although most law enforcement academies include ethics training, adding course content that educates police recruits about the nature and structure of character is necessary to fully develop their understanding of character and its importance in their chosen profession. For example, requiring recruits to complete the character assessment survey described above has several positive outcomes. Completing the assessment gives individual recruits an understanding of the breadth of their unique character profile. They should be asked to reflect on how they have employed their signature strengths to achieve difficult goals or to overcome challenges. Asking them to write a plan to harness their signature strengths to excel in their training teaches them how to intentionally leverage strengths of character to accomplish hard tasks. Experienced police officers can share stories of how they used their own signature strengths to their advantage. In small groups, recruits can reflect upon their strengths and explore how different strengths can be used to achieve common goals.

In short, explicit education about character science is a fundamental part of a systematic character development curriculum.

Positive and Sustained Mentoring

Mentoring should begin in training and continue throughout the career. Some of the most effective mentoring occurs naturally, within the context of other activities and on the job. Mealtimes, breaks in training, and informal conversations during a shift offer opportunities to mentor. Sometimes this mentoring focuses on tactical responses—what was and was not done right on a recent call for service. Mentoring on character also occurs in these contexts. Officers provide feedback to others and reflect on their own actions and at the same time address character. If they have observed a lapse of character in another officer, they may talk about it among themselves, providing a chance to learn from another's mistakes.

Enact a formal mentoring plan. Each recruit is assigned a field training officer (FTO) with the role of educating and evaluating the recruit's technical competence and character attributes. Law enforcement officers say a mentor "brought me along" into the profession. Formal mentoring should not end at the completion of field training. Less experienced officers should occasionally be assigned to ride with a first-line supervisor. A lot of wisdom can be communicated and absorbed through the course of an eight- or ten-hour shift.

Mentors are critical for higher-ranking personnel as well. Do not assume that because you have been promoted to a higher rank you are no longer in the need of mentoring. With each promotion, a senior police officer has fewer peers in whom to confide and from whom to learn. Police departments and other organizations should build time into their training schedules for senior personnel to come together to share experiences. It also important for mentoring to cross standard organizational barriers. When it comes to character development, multiple perspectives are better than one. Grit and physical courage may be among the most important character traits for a patrol officer, while social intelligence and perspective may be more important for investigative work. The point is that organizations that design ways for personnel at all levels to mentor and be mentored—on character as well as technical job skills—will do a better job of character development than organizations that leave this to chance.

Negative mentoring occurs as well, of course, especially in informal mentoring relationships. A cynical, burned-out senior officer can impair the character development of other officers, especially recruits and inexperienced officers. Leaders must do their best to prevent negative mentoring. A charismatic but toxic mentor can devastate impressionable and less-experienced personnel.

Mentoring may look a bit different in other types of organizations, but all organizations require a combination of informal and formal mentoring. Firefighters spend long periods together during their shifts, and mealtimes offer excellent opportunities for informal mentoring. Unlike police officers, who work alone or in two-officer cars, firefighters work in larger groups and often have time for training and mentoring during the assigned

shift. The military, because of its resources and numbers of personnel, can spare time for offsite mentoring events and professional military education. Army officers who complete the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) often report the mentoring they received in their year at Fort Leavenworth as more important to their development than technical instruction in field-grade command skills.

Leadership Opportunities

Classroom learning and even mentored skills will degrade if people do not have a chance to apply them in their jobs. Leading others is a powerful learning experience. Most high-stakes organizations have rigid and well-defined hierarchies, often similar to military rank structure. The goal of every organization is to develop its recruits and junior personnel to assume higher levels of responsibility.

When you are responsible for others, you learn the importance of your own character and its profound influence on those you lead. You learn that looking the other way when a subordinate acts in ways that are not consistent with your organization's values inevitably leads to trouble. You also learn that if your own actions are not consistent with your organization's values, you are implicitly giving the approval for others to stray from these values. Thus, assigning progressively more responsible leadership positions to subordinates and then giving feedback—mentoring them—is a critical part of developing the character of those you lead.

As at West Point, law enforcement or firefighter training recruits should be assigned tasks that require them to coordinate and influence fellow recruits. These leadership roles build character strengths of perspective, social intelligence, fairness, and self-regulation. During training, leading a group of fellow trainees in putting out a fire or handling a family disturbance reinforces the importance of these and other positive character traits. Rotate these roles so that all trainees get an opportunity to lead in some manner.

Look for opportunities to do this on the job as well. If your patrol corporal is taking a vacation day, give a junior officer a chance to lead the squad or team that day. Sergeants learn a lot when their lieutenant takes a two-week vacation and they fill in as acting shift supervisor. Every shift served at this higher level provides object lessons in the role of character and leadership.

To summarize, high-character organizations take deliberate steps to hone the character of their members. Educating and building character skills, constant and genuine mentoring, and providing the opportunity for members to learn by leading others are essential in developing and maintaining a high-character organization.

Developing Your Own Character

You can apply the three facets of character development programs to yourself as well as to others. Reading books on character will build your understanding of character in general and how it relates to your own life. Actively seek out mentors. In the work setting, engage

trusted and respected colleagues in conversations about character, why it matters, and how to nurture it.

Learn how to use character to achieve goals. After completing the online survey of strengths described earlier, develop an explicit plan to intentionally use one or more of your signature strengths to help you complete a difficult task or to remain resilient in the face of challenge and adversity. Psychological research shows that this simple exercise is effective in improving positive mood and diminishing negative emotions and feelings.[6]

Psychologists have also discovered that the character strength of gratitude is especially powerful in helping people deal with life's difficulties. An easy and useful exercise is called the gratitude visit. In this exercise, you think about someone who has been a tremendous help in your life but whom you have never properly thanked. Write a detailed letter to them explaining what they have done for you, why it is so important, and how much you appreciate it. Then arrange a visit and read the letter out loud to this person. Not only is this impactful for you and the person you write to, but the positive effects on your well-being extend for many weeks.[7]

Yet another strength-building exercise is called the three blessings exercise.[8] Each night (or day, if you are working the night shift) before you go to bed, reflect on your day. Identify and write down three things that went well that day and why they went well. What character strengths did you use in each case? How did you employ them? This exercise builds a number of strengths, including gratitude and perspective.

Mindfulness is the state of being aware of one's surroundings and conditions and acting with awareness in response to the current situation. It is easy to lose a sense of yourself, especially under the stressful and dangerous conditions in which *in extremis* leaders often find themselves. Have you ever, in the heat of an incident, behaved in a way that is "out of character" for you? A firefighter says something harsh to a bystander. A police officer uses more force than necessary to effect an arrest. Or, in an extreme case, a soldier kills a captured enemy combatant. During stress we become externally focused. This may help us be more vigilant and task-oriented, but it can also make us lose sight of personal and institutional values.

Mindfulness training addresses these situations. Each day, perhaps before a shift or mission, spend a few moments in quiet reflection. Think about the type of person you are and the types of situations in which you expect to find yourself. A soldier may reflect on core character strengths of courage, honesty, and fortitude. A teacher may focus more on strengths of the head (for effective teaching) and strengths of the heart (for caring about students). Doing this helps maintain self-awareness during stress. It also helps you put things into perspective, gives you a sense of control of the situation, and enables you to move from reactive mode (at the mercy of the tactical situation) to active mode (in charge of yourself during the situation). The net effect is to prevent you from feeling overwhelmed by the situation. Mindfulness may even change the way your brain reacts to stress by producing neurochemicals that promote a sense of well-being.[9]

Intentionally engage in activities that tap into your strengths of head, heart, and guts. To enhance head strengths, seek out new learning opportunities, rediscover your natural curiosity by trying new hobbies and activities, and cultivate your love of learning by enrolling in courses that improve your work skills and knowledge. Strengths of the heart are enhanced by intentionally being kind to others, learning to listen to their needs and opinions, and making love of family a priority. For strengths of the gut, look for courageous role models and mentors, embrace dangerous situations as an opportunity to grow rather than as a threat, and surround yourself with courageous people (this should be easy in your line of work!).

A critical aspect of character self-development is ensuring that the values, virtues, and character attributes you display in your private life are aligned with those of your organization. Trouble ensues when your personal and professional values are misaligned. Nowhere is this more evident than in your social media presence. For example, when a police officer posts racist and hateful comments on social media, this destroys his or her credibility. You can't check your values at the door when you go off duty. To Serve and Protect goes on 24/7/365. The same is true for other professions. Think of the damage a teacher does by posting opinions and beliefs online that are inconsistent with the values of the teaching profession. You must live your values in word and deed, both on and off duty. Failure to do so not only damages you, it erodes the trust the public has for your organization.

The secret to building your own character strengths is to make doing so a priority and to actively and intentionally (indeed, mindfully) develop a plan to do so. Maintain the alignment between personal and professional conduct and values. As a leader, you know that others look to you as a model for what "right" looks like. Therefore, making your own character development a priority should be a key and essential task among your daily duties.

USING YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS: THE CHARACTER TOOLBOX

It is useful to think of your twenty-four strengths as analogous to a toolbox. There are probably five or six tools that you use most often, but sometimes you need to dig deep into your toolbox to find just the right tool for a particular job. Your twenty-four character strengths are similar. While your signature strengths are the ones that you rely on most often, you have many more that you can draw upon.

Learning to match the right character strength to the right job will help you lead others in dangerous situations and help foster your personal achievement and resilience. Police work is often described as 99 percent boredom and 1 percent sheer terror. The character strengths needed to lead in routine situations (the 99 percent) may be different from those needed to lead where lives are truly on the line (the 1 percent). Moreover, the strengths of character needed to handle routine management and bureaucracy within the department are likely to differ from those needed to lead officers on the street. Finally, to be an effective

leader you must keep your personal life in order. The character strengths required to maintain positive and healthy relationships with your family are, yet again, quite different.

Given the diverse character attributes required to lead in dangerous situations, relying on just one or two character strengths may lead to undesirable outcomes. A fire department battalion chief who uses strengths of the gut—courage, grit, determination—exclusively may fail in the important job of building a cohesive team, which relies more on strengths of the heart. Police officers and leaders learn very quickly that courage, while necessary to the job, is not sufficient in all situations. Leaders in all organizations must be flexible and use their full character toolbox to lead successfully.

An all-too-common mistake in high-risk occupations is when the leader, or followers, use the character skills that are most critical to on-the-job performance to relate to their family or friends outside the context of work. At home, strengths of the heart (love, kindness, fairness) rise in importance. The leader who leans on strengths of the gut at work and then uses them to manage his or her family relationships is asking for trouble.

Try this simple exercise. We have already suggested that you intentionally utilize your signature strengths to succeed at challenging tasks. Try this again, but this time (1) make separate plans for your work life and your home life, and (2) dig deeper into your character toolbox and experiment with using your less dominant character strengths. If kindness is lower in your hierarchy of strengths, for example, intentionally use it to foster good relationships. Keep a journal on what works and why it works. By doing this you will learn how to match strengths to tasks more effectively, and you can begin doing so on a daily basis.

CHARACTER MATTERS IN MANY WAYS

Learning about your character and how to use it in all aspects of your life, including leading others in dangerous situations, has a variety of benefits. Here is a short list of payoffs from focusing on developing your own character and that of your followers.

1. *Stress management*. Dangerous-context professions are inherently stressful. Strengths of the head help build confidence that you have the technical skills needed to accomplish any mission. Strengths of the gut provide you with the courage, grit, and determination needed to adapt and overcome obstacles. And strengths of the heart help you and your followers deal with the emotional aftershocks of major events.
2. *Resilience*. Psychologist Martin Seligman developed the PERMA model of well-being: positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishments. Strengths of the head, heart, and gut enhance all of these.
3. *Job performance*. Dangerous occupations are complex. To succeed you must be more than smart and experienced. Applying character strengths helps you excel in the technical aspects of your job. For example, grit—the passionate pursuit of long-term goals—has been linked to success in such diverse tasks as academic grades;

winning the National Spelling Bee; completing West Point's demanding four-year program of academic, military, physical fitness performance; and many more.[10]

4. *Completing what you start*. West Point cadets high in grit are more likely to complete cadet basic training than their less gritty counterparts.[11] Completing what you start—persistence—is one of the character strengths within the virtue of courage. For firefighters, police, first responders, and other critical incident occupations, quitting is not an option.
5. *Meaning and purpose. In extremis* leaders who flourish in their occupation do so because their work gives them an immense sense of meaning and purpose. Their work matters; it makes the world a better and safer place. Learning to use your entire kit of character strengths helps build meaning and purpose.
6. *Growing from trauma*. Readers of this chapter have heard a lot about post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) but may not have heard about a more common outcome to trauma: post-traumatic growth (PTG). This occurs when the person ultimately becomes stronger and more resilient following exposure to a traumatic event. U.S. Army company commanders returning from combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, felt that they had grown in the character strengths of teamwork, capacity to love, bravery, gratitude, and honesty.[12] What police officer or firefighter has returned home after dealing with a tragedy and not stopped to savor the love of their family? It is important to know that PTG is a more likely outcome from trauma than PTSD. Leaders can help instill this more positive narrative, and training academies should emphasize the fact that pathology (i.e., PTSD) does not always follow trauma, and in fact a more likely outcome is personal growth.

POSITIVE ORGANIZATIONS

The culture of an organization drives the character of its members, for better or for worse. High-performing organizations have a clear and consistent commitment to positive values in their members. Such organizations commit significant effort to instill and nurture these values in every employee.

The U.S. Army is an example. Centuries of hard experience in the crucible of ground combat have shown the fundamental importance of positive character in winning battles and in maintaining an effective and resilient force. Among the first things a recruit learns are the seven Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. The other services celebrate similar values.

An effective Army leader must be trusted. As you will see in chapter 10 of this book, studies of soldiers during combat operations revealed that trust is dependent on three critical leader attributes: *competence, character*, and *caring*. Obviously, nobody would trust a technically incompetent army officer, police squad leader, or firefighter battalion

chief. It sometimes happens that a person is promoted to a leadership position based on high test scores or administrative abilities but then fails as an operational leader. Those around this person will recognize that failure was inevitable because of his or her technical deficiencies.

But even the most technically proficient leaders fail if they are deficient in character. A leader who lies, cares only for self, or is cowardly cannot successfully lead others in *in extremis* situations. When lives are on the line, character is the bedrock of trust.

Finally, effective leaders display a strong sense of caring about their followers. Caring comes from the moral virtues of humanity and from strengths of the heart. It is important to note that caring is more than just relating to or liking subordinates. True caring involves balancing the welfare of individuals in the context of completing the mission. A combat leader engages the enemy knowing soldiers may be wounded or killed. The mission must be accomplished. But the combat leader who prepares troops for the battle, leads them effectively during the battle, and prioritizes attending to their physical and emotional states after the battle demonstrates caring in the larger sense.

Positive organizations nurture character through a number of strategies. We have seen how the Army embraces its seven values. Law enforcement officers are taught the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police.[13] Firefighters learn and internalize the Firefighter of Code Ethics.[14] Character is the foundation of trust and success in corporate settings as well. Johnson & Johnson, for instance, celebrates its Code of Business Ethics, the Credo.[15]

Codes of ethics and credos are of little value if they are not firmly integrated into an organization's daily culture. At Johnson & Johnson, the Credo is displayed in every workspace. Each year during employee evaluations, managers discuss with each employee how their work and behavior reflect the Credo. As Johnson & Johnson's executive chairman of the board, Alex Gorsky said, "Nothing is as important as not compromising your integrity to the people who trust and depend on you."[16] The lesson is simple: make your organization's values external, and drive them home to all members at every opportunity.

Chapter 10 presents a model for organizations to integrate character into their larger personnel development strategies. The IROC (individual, relationship, organization, and context) model specifies what organizations need to do to optimize personal and organizational development within the character framework. In *The Character Edge: Leading and Winning with Integrity* Robert Caslen and Michael Matthews provide a survey based on the IROC model that may be used to assess how well an organization is meeting its developmental objectives.[17]

Leaders who prioritize character and work in organizations that do the same are poised for success. They not only accomplish difficult missions but do so while remaining resilient in the face of adversity. Think of this relationship as a variation of the golden rule. Leaders of character improve the organization, and organizations of character improve their leaders.

THREATS TO CHARACTER

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, and this is especially true when it comes to character. By understanding how character is developed in self and others, and by focusing on improving organizational climate, it is possible to mitigate against character failure.

Caslen and Matthews describe a simple way of classifying threats to character.[18] Table 2.2 summarizes their Character Risk model. Threats to character come from three sources: (1) intrapersonal, that is, existing within the individual; (2) environmental, external elements that create stress; and (3) social/organizational, aspects of the family, social environment, or organizational culture that enable poor character. Character risk is highest when two or more sources of risk overlap.

Leaders can minimize risk due to intrapersonal deficiencies by carefully selecting those they hire into their organization. As we have discussed, hiring decisions have traditionally been made on the basis of aptitude or technical competence. In law enforcement

TABLE 2.2
The Character Risk Model

Intrapersonal Threats
• Selfishness
• Machiavellianism
• Narcissism
• Lying
• Double standards
• Not caring about others
• Substance abuse
Environmental Threats
• Unpredictable situations
• Shiftwork
• Excessive heat or cold
• Danger
• Scarcity of vital resources
• Overwhelming mission requirements
Social/Organizational Threats
• Poor command climate
• Toxic leadership
• Excessive bureaucracy
• Ill-defined organization mission and values
• Dysfunctional chain of command
• Family discord

organizations, potential recruits are screened for intelligence and physical ability. Character may be indirectly assessed through interviews and background checks. When conducting interviews and background checks, be on the lookout for the "dark triad" of character traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy.[19] Careful interview protocols may detect excessive self-centeredness (narcissism), a ruthless preoccupation to achieve goals no matter the cost (Machiavellianism), or habitual lying and manipulation of others for personal gain (psychopathy). The last thing you want in dangerous situations are people, especially leaders, with any of these traits. Inevitably, they bring ruin upon themselves, others, and the reputation of the organization.

To put this into perspective, consider the "25-75" rule.[20] Psychologists' research on job performance has focused largely on intelligence (IQ) and aptitude. At best, however, intelligence and aptitude account for only 25 percent of performance in academic grades or in on-the-job performance. That means that 75 percent of job performance is the result of other factors that have received scant attention from psychologists. Character strengths are a big part of this 75 percent.

Recruiters selecting firefighters, police officers, or soldiers usually focus on intelligence and physical fitness. Character is assessed less directly; often, recruiters assume that a clean criminal record equates to good character. But character flaws do not always result in criminal behavior, and applicants with character flaws are sometimes hired. We recommend that hiring practices be amended to reflect the 25-75 rule. Intelligence and aptitude tests should still be required, but agencies should focus more attention on identifying recruits with positive character, screening out those weak in character, and developing systematic plans to educate newly hired personnel about character and ways of building it.

Environmental threats are common in dangerous situations. Good leaders become intimately familiar with the environments in which they operate and prepare strategies to mitigate against environmental threats to character. A good example is shiftwork. Scientific studies consistently show that humans' performance is adversely affected when they work night shifts, and perhaps even more so when shifts are constantly rotated.[21] There is convincing evidence that shiftwork damages the brain in relatively long lasting ways.[22] The effect is severe enough to warrant an ominous name: circadian scarring.[23] Circadian scarring is observed in the brains of people who regularly work nights and rotating shifts and is associated with chronic fatigue. A study of military personnel showed that mature moral reasoning declined with sleep deprivation.[24] Being chronically tired reduces self-awareness and makes it harder to make moral and virtuous decisions. Leaders may mitigate this risk to some extent by not rotating shifts too frequently so that workers can adapt to their assigned shift, or by assigning personnel to permanent shifts, trying to match the assigned shift to worker preferences.

Excessively long missions or shifts also pose an environmental hazard that may be addressed by better managerial decisions. Soldiers assaulting a major target may have to

push themselves beyond normal limits, but most public safety employees should not. For example, corrections officers at New York City's Rikers Island were reportedly required to work triple shifts as a result of staffing shortages.[25] Sleep deprivation added to the hostile and stressful environment corrections officers experience is a perfect recipe for a breakdown of character. It is hard enough to exercise strengths of character in such an environment when one is fully rested. Data show that 24 hours of sleep deprivation is equivalent to a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08 percent, and that extended sleep deprivation raises BAC equivalents.[26] *In extremis* leaders should prioritize good sleep hygiene for themselves and their followers to minimize on-the-job character failures.

Other environmental factors associated with character failure include prolonged exposure to danger, a hostile (too cold, hot, dry, or wet) physical environment, excessive noise, and unpredictable harmful events. These environmental threats multiply with intrapersonal weaknesses to greatly increase the risk of ethical, moral, or character failures. Ironically, such environments may bring out the best in people of strong character and bring out the worst in those of weak character. As the Battle of Gettysburg hero Col. Joshua Chamberlain said, "War is for the participants a test of character; it makes bad men worse and good men better."[27]

Social and organizational climate is the third potential threat to positive character. Leaders set the tone of organizational climate, for better or for worse. Dysfunctional organizations lack a clear commitment to values and character, have vague standards of conduct, and fail to monitor or enforce the standards they do have. In such organizations, leaders tend to be data-driven and to focus on short-term organizational goals to the detriment of good character. When selfish and Machiavellian leaders rise to the top, trust is eroded. These organizations may meet short-term objectives but inevitably fail in the long run. Unfortunately, examples of such organizations abound. Football teams tolerate poor character and conduct among players, coaches, and staff so long as the team wins. Corporations value only the bottom line, risking their reputation for a quarterly profit. Read any media feed on any day and you will see examples of these failures.

Fortunately, leaders can exert a tremendous impact on organizational climate. And because organizational climate is such a powerful influence on character, strategies to enhance organizational values and policies that support them offer the most powerful tool to mitigate against character failure. We saw above how the IROC model provides a way to achieve this goal. Section 3 of this book, "Building the Organization," provides a deep dive into how to build and sustain a positive, values-driven organization.

REVISITING THE OPENING VIGNETTE

We intentionally left the Operation Iraqi Freedom scenario open-ended. What course of action do you think the team leader chose?[28] What course would you have taken?

More important for this discussion, what virtues and character strengths did this leader need to prepare for the mission, execute it, and recover from it? Here are how

the six moral virtues and twenty-four character strengths may have contributed to his decision.

1. *Wisdom and knowledge*. This leader spent years training to prepare for such a mission. This required the moral virtues of wisdom and knowledge. Through love of learning, he sought to learn as much as possible about the tactics, techniques, and procedures needed in this situation. Because the situation was unique and did not unfold as expected, he needed the strength of creativity to come to a tactical solution. The strength of open-mindedness was critical to considering different options. His sense of perspective helped him make sense of this chaotic and dangerous situation.
2. *Courage*. Physical bravery was obviously needed in this situation. So was integrity—doing the right thing by not killing noncombatants to achieve short-term mission success. Likewise, this leader needed grit and determination. His zest gave him the energy to continue the mission, to fight through to the end.
3. *Justice.* Working well as a member of team, not just leading it, was important here. Being fair to ISF personnel and noncombatants was essential. In a situation where a mistake could cost friendly lives or ruin reputations, mindful employment of skills acquired through years of training and experience set the leader up for success.
4. *Humanity*. Even in the heat of the moment, the character traits of love, kindness, and social intelligence helped the team leader weigh various tactical options and do the right thing both for his own team members and for the others in the situation.
5. *Temperance*. Forgiving ISF personnel for any shortcomings, a sense of humility, and forgiveness helped the team leader appreciate both the contributions and the errors of his fellow combatants. Self-regulation prevented him from overreacting to the situation.
6. *Transcendence.* After the battle, the team leader needed to come to terms with his actions and their consequences. Appreciating the beauty in the world, having gratitude for the blessings of life, using humor to put things into perspective, maintaining hope and optimism even in the face and aftermath of the situation, and spirituality all helped the team leader remain resilient.

Reflect on how you have used your moral virtues and strengths of character to prepare, complete, and recover from a difficult situation. You may be surprised to see that you intuitively used many of the virtues and strengths described here.

LEADING AND WINNING WITH INTEGRITY

In high-risk professions, winning a battle is not enough. Long-term success hinges on a combination of the personal character and integrity of members of the organization, the cultural values and practices of the organization, and the mutually supportive interaction between the two.

Winning the right way is crucial. Making the arrest no matter the cost may pad crime statistics, but if bystanders are injured or a suspect dies due to excessive force in the process, the cost to the law enforcement officer and the department is great and long lasting. The combat leader who is willing to kill innocent civilians to achieve a tactical success may win in the short run but cost a strategic victory in the long run.

This focus on the long-term good of the organization, even at the expense of a particular mission, places a heavy burden on its leaders. But this burden is lightened by virtues of character. Like the team leader in the opening scenario, the moral virtues of wisdom and knowledge, courage, justice, humanity, temperance, and transcendence help leaders do the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way.

Technical and tactical competence is essential to winning. But without the virtues and character attributes discussed in this chapter, winning will be temporary and victory hollow. Individuals and organizations that buy into the ideas in this chapter enjoy the privilege of being part of a profession that makes the world better, one that they look forward to working in each day, and one they are proud to be a member of. In short, they win, and they win the right way.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Positive character is essential to leading in dangerous situations. To fail in character is to fail in leadership.
2. Character is multidimensional. Six moral virtues are supported by multiple character strengths. Leaders' character traits are analogous to a toolbox—they must learn to match tool to task.
3. Character is not fixed. Leaders can implement strategies to develop their own character and the character of their followers.
4. Leaders must focus on creating a positive organizational climate that fosters and supports positive values and character. Leaders of character make the organization better, and positive organizations make leaders better.
5. Threats to character stem from intrapersonal, environmental, and social/organizational factors. Effective *in extremis* leaders actively work to mitigate against character failure by proactively addressing it.
6. To win, and to win consistently, individuals and organizations must make positive character a core focus in their lives and work.

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28. The team leader made the following decision:
    After weighing the options, it was apparent that, indeed, we would need to decide between multiple suboptimal solutions. Ultimately, we knew an exfiltration was not feasible due to the large open field and exposure to rooftop firing positions. We were equally uncomfortable attacking the residential buildings with armed aircraft due to the potential noncombatants in each of the buildings. To protect the team and ISF, we needed to get inside the target building before the enemy could get further organized. The U.S. soldiers moved to the breach and gained entry into the target building as quickly as possible. Once the initial entry was made, the ISF followed our lead and cleared the remainder of the target building, leading to the mission being accomplished that Christmas morning.

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CHAPTER 3

Ethical Decision Making in Dangerous Situations

JOE DOTY, STEPHEN INGALLS, JOE THOMAS,
MATT LEWIS, AND STEVEN COOK

Four SWAT sniper deputy sheriffs have an eighteen-year-old male surrounded in a snow-filled backyard. Less than an hour earlier this young man had shot a deputy sheriff in the face and neck as the deputy tried to apprehend him. The deputy died at the scene. There was a warrant out for the suspect on multiple drug, theft, and sex offenses. When the sniper team had the suspect surrounded, they knew with 100 percent certainty that he was the individual who had just killed a friend and teammate. They were enraged. With weapons at the ready, what should they do? Shoot him or arrest him? They arrested him.

HOW WERE THESE FOUR SWAT DEPUTIES able to make a sound and ethical decision in the heat of the moment? How, in the profession of law enforcement, which has a sacred and unique duty to protect and defend our communities, can we educate and train such character-based sheriffs who can make sound, reasonable, and ethical decisions under stress? How, in dangerous and fluid contexts, can we ensure our teams are doing the right thing?

Doing the right thing in difficult circumstances is not easy. Doing the right thing when it involves your teammate, family, or best friend is not easy. But for those who volunteer to serve others in dangerous contexts—law enforcement, EMS, firefighters, the military, and other professions—doing the right thing is the foundation of the Warrior Character. And doing the right thing requires making ethically sound decisions—often in exceedingly difficult circumstances.

In this chapter we introduce a straightforward process model for ethical decision making and action, discuss how leaders can develop their ethical decision-making skills, and

explore potential obstacles to ethical decision making as well as leader actions to navigate barriers to ethical action.

FOUNDATIONS OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Trust, based on character, is the foundational principle among leaders and teammates in dangerous situations.[1] If organizations that operate in dangerous contexts do not have trust, they will not be effective, and people will get hurt and die unnecessarily. An expectation of this trust is that all members of the team can and will make ethical decisions that meet the professional codes, culture, and expectations of the organization and the client (the citizens who grant them their authority).

Members of first responders, the military, and similar professions can put their trust in others in two primary domains: their character and their competence. Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf noted that if the leader could have only one of those two, that one should be character. Retired general Eric Shinseki also highlighted the importance of character as opposed to competence.[2] Ethical decision making is a component of character.

Character in conjunction with personality are what define people, the decisions they make, and *how* they act.[3] It is their identity. Additionally, who they are and how they act is sacrosanct because the lives of people, especially in professions such as first responders and the military, involve interactions with other people; human interaction is the daily business of the world. Overlay a dangerous or life-threatening context, and the ability to making ethically sound decisions based on one's character is foundational.

Law enforcement professionals, firefighters, EMS professionals, and those in the military all have a fundamental expectation of character in their colleagues because they know all will be required to make ethically sound decisions in complex and dangerous situations. As one deputy sheriff put it, "Character bounds the response." Anything short of 100 percent trust in a teammate's character and ability to make ethical decisions can result in harm or mission failure. Professionals in dangerous, complex, fluid situations do not have the time to think about or question whether their buddy/partner/teammate can be trusted; leaders lacking the trust of others will lack influence (see chapter 10 for an in-depth exploration of trust).

Leaders with the Warrior Character are likely to be more aware and mindful of the presence of ethical challenges and issues in dangerous contexts. They are also more likely to ensure that their subordinates, teams, and organizations are developing the ability to make ethical decisions.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

A solid, nonnegotiable ethical foundation is at the heart of every leader who operates in dangerous contexts—again the Warrior Character. Ethical leadership and ethical decision making play a crucial role in VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) operating environments where leaders may be faced *with dilemmas in which following the*

FIGURE 3.1. James Rest Four-Component Model

rules rigidly does not always resolve the problem and may not even be the "right" thing to do. Leaders must be able to think and decide quickly on an appropriate course of action, which requires the ability to reason based on ethics—ethical decision making.

Ethical leadership derives both outward from leaders (how they behave and lead) and should reside within leaders (who they are and how they think)—it is their identity. Brown, Treviño, and Harrison define ethical leadership as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making."[4] Day, Harrison, and Halpin suggest that "leadership and ethics are inherently intertwined. *Just about every decision made and action taken by a leader has ethical implications.*"[5]

A MODEL FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND ACTION

Ethical decision making is the conscious and intentional cognitive and affective (emotional) process of reasoning through a known ethical dilemma, then deriving the most ethical solution and having the courage to act on that solution. James Rest's model for ethical decision-making (figure 3.1) outlines the process for making ethical decisions and taking ethical action. According to Rest's model, a leader must first recognize the potential ethical implications involved in a decision (moral awareness). Next the leader must think through and decide what course of action accomplishes the mission in the most ethical manner (ethical judgment). Having decided on a course of action, the leader must marshal his or her intentions to take ethical action (moral intention). Finally, the leader generates the strength of will to take ethical action (ethical action).[6] Below we explore each step of Rest's model.

Moral Awareness

Many decisions have an ethical component (thus priming or requiring ethical stimuli), which we define as the rightness or wrongness of an action (or lack of action) in context. For example, what is the line you do not cross when subduing an uncooperative suspect? If you are authorized to use deadly force, should you? Note that even mundane situations often have an ethical component to them. Am I professional and respectful to an inmate when the inmate is rude? How attentively do I listen to those who work for me? How do I respond if a colleague is not pulling their fair share of the work? Responses to any of these situations (and many others) are not black-and-white, or necessarily even right or wrong. A person who takes a more holistic view of the ethical components that can be associated with many mundane decisions and tasks will find some ethical

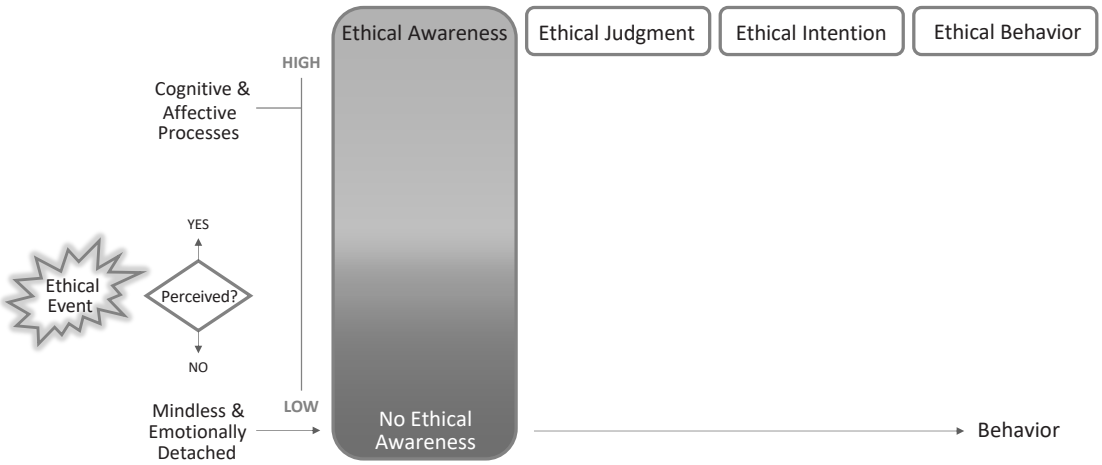

FIGURE 3.2. Modified James Rest Four-Component Model

components to them, and in doing so can increase their level of ethical awareness (the first step in the Rest Model).

Figure 3.2 is the Rest model modified to emphasize the construct of self-awareness, or being mindfully present (see the "Degree of Mindfulness" step). It is possible for first responders' levels of ethical mindfulness to be insufficient; that is, they may not be fully aware of the ethical component in a given situation. Cognitive and emotional presence is on a spectrum, from high to low. Individuals' moral awareness and reasoning abilities will influence their ethical decisions and behaviors. It is quite possible that one could miss an ethical issue present in a complex or fast-moving situation.[7] Like any other accessible skill, moral awareness can be improved through practice—by including ethical dilemmas in training, discussing historical case studies, examining lessons learned, brainstorming possible ethical issues in various scenarios, and so on. In two of the more publicized ethical failures, one could argue that Lt. William Calley in My Lai, Vietnam (1968), and the guards at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq (2002) were mindless in their ethical transgressions; hence, they failed at some point along the Rest model.

Ethical Judgment

The key to effective ethical judgment is to have a systematic process that one can follow in making ethical judgments, similar to the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP). The more people use the process, the more automatic it will become. Below is a suggested systematic process to make ethical decisions.[8]

1. *Identify and frame the ethical issue*. The first step is to identify the ethical issue. Next the leader needs to frame the ethical issue by considering the facts, key assumptions, key stakeholders' perspectives, and his or her intuition on the most ethical way to resolve the dilemma. Finally, consider the most important criteria for an effective resolution.

2. *Process the issue through ethical lenses*. Viewing the issue through the various lenses below gives the leader a broader perspective on the impact of the ethical dilemma and insights in how to resolve it.
   a. Outcomes lens: What action provides the greatest good for the most people. What action minimizes harm for the most people?
   b. Rights, duties, and responsibilities lens: What action best upholds your duties and the rights of others, and adheres to laws and regulations?
   c. Values lens: What action stays true to your values and the organization's values?
3. *Decide*. Generate at least two viable courses of actions and evaluate them to determine the best one to resolve the ethical dilemma.
   a. Game each course of action to determine short- and long-term advantages and disadvantages.
   b. Revisit key assumptions.
   c. Evaluate each course of action using the key decision criteria determined in the identify and frame step.
   d. Choose the best feasible course of action based on evaluation against key decision criteria and your intuition.

Ethical Intentions

After deciding on the best course of action, the leader must consider the mission; his or her core values and identity; and his or her responsibilities to team members, the organization, and the profession to generate intentions to take ethical action.

Ethical Action

After generating the intentions to take ethical action, the leader needs to create a strategy to generate the strength of will to take ethical action. Consider potential obstacles to taking ethical action and create a plan to mitigate them. Next, seek advice and support from peers, leaders, mentors, and trusted others. Finally, take ethical action, adjust as needed to resolve the dilemma, and communicate the rationale to your teammates. The more a leader practices ethical action, the more he or she becomes comfortable acting in difficult and uncomfortable situations.

The four-step Rest model is a process model. Some individuals—those with greater character—are better able to effectively enact this process. They are more morally aware, more able to make sound ethical decisions, more likely to take on the responsibility needed to form intentions to act, and then have the courage and confidence to execute those actions. Next, we discuss how to develop ethical sensitivity and the ability to make ethical decisions in ourselves and in our organizations.

DEVELOPING ETHICAL DECISION MAKING AND ACTION SKILLS AND ABILITIES

The ability to be ethically aware and to make ethical decisions must be developed through repetitive training and education. Training results in a skill (for example, marksmanship), education results in more or new knowledge (for example, new laws), and development results in a changed person. Therefore, to develop the skill of ethical sensitivity and the ability to make ethical decisions, individuals must undergo a transformation that fundamentally alters how they think, feel, see themselves (identity), and behave. In short, there must be permanent change. We can train (transfer skills and abilities) a leader on ethical decision-making processes, techniques, or methods. We can educate (transfer knowledge) a leader on ethical philosophies or theories that they can use in those ethical decision-making processes. Finally, we can develop (make lasting changes in identity, perspectives, and meaning-making system) a leader by creating an identity in which they see themselves as an ethical leader; have the desire to do the "right" thing; and have the strength to take ownership of ethical challenges, intend to act, and put their decisions into action. Below are some simple and effective ways to enhance ethical decision making and action within your team or organization.[9]

Make Ethics Part of Daily Activities

Everything that occurs within an organization—meetings, training events, picnics, after-action reviews—should include some mention of ethics, ethical decision making, or organizational values. This raises members' ethical awareness and reinforces the organization's culture. Leaders need to remember that "omission of discourse is NOT value-neutral education. There is no such thing. Omissions send a clear, if unintended message that these things are not important."[10] Or worded differently, if you never talk about something, you are sending a clear message that it is not important. Thus, make ethics and doing the right thing part of the team's daily activities so it becomes just the way we do business.

Leaders Role-Modeling and Sharing Rationale for Decisions

Leaders should take every opportunity to share with their teammates the rationale they used to make decisions and discuss how the organization's and their own values guided the decision. This simple technique exposes teammates to different ways of thinking about ethics while reinforcing the organization's culture.

Identify and Game Potential Ethical Issues

Teams can consider scenarios they will operate in and identify ethical issues they might face. After identifying the ethical issues, they can process each dilemma through an ethical decision-making framework to determine the most ethical way to resolve it. This exercise allows members to build their own ethical playbook, so when they are confronted with an ethical dilemma, they have already processed the dilemma and know the ethical

response. This builds ethical awareness and confidence to take ethical action because they know they have the organization's support.

Include Ethics in Planning and Rehearsals

Leaders should ensure that ethical considerations are a formal part of the planning process. So, when courses of action are developed, potential ethical issues are identified; and when courses of action are evaluated, the decision-making criteria include maintaining individual and organizational integrity. Furthermore, potential ethical actions should be part of rehearsals to sustain ethical awareness and build confidence.

Include Ethics in After-Action Reviews

After every operation, the team members should discuss the ethical issues they encountered, how they processed them, the ethical actions taken and their effectiveness, and the lessons learned, to improve future ethical decision making and action. This reflection is critical for the development of all members and the enhancement of the organization's ethical culture.

Using Ethical Vignettes

Vignettes are a powerful way to teach ethical awareness, decision-making processes, and action. When you place team members into a vignette, they can reason through as individuals and then process as a collective. This collective processing allows teammates to benefit from hearing different perspectives and consider different ways to resolve the dilemma. After the collective discussion, the instructor or leader can share the rest of the story: how the people involved in the vignette either successfully or unsuccessfully resolved the ethical dilemma. Let us process the opening vignette as an example. The instructor or team leader would place team members in the situation as SWAT snipers and ask the following questions, for each step in the Rest model, to process the dilemma.

1. *Recognize the ethical dilemma.* Do the SWAT snipers, full of rage because their teammate was killed, recognize that they must control their emotions and act in an ethical manner? How do you control your emotions so they do not lead you to take unethical action?
2. *Reason through it.* If we shoot the suspect, what are the consequences? If we arrest the suspect, what are the consequences?
   a. Rights, duties, and responsibilities lens: if we shoot the suspect, it will violate our rules of engagement (ROE). Furthermore, we have a duty to uphold the law, and the suspect has the right to be protected under the law. As such, it seems the most ethical course of action is to take the suspect into custody.
   b. Outcomes lens: both shooting and not shooting (arresting) will neutralize the suspect. Shooting will violate our ROE, potentially destroy trust with the

community, and tarnish the reputation of the profession. If we arrest him without incident, we will uphold the law and may build community trust, uphold the reputation of the profession, and protect the team from potential moral injury. Thus, from the outcomes lens perspective, the greatest good is served by taking the suspect into custody.

c. Values lens: the SWAT snipers will have to look within themselves and discover, based on the makeup of their character, how their individual response will reflect their core values as humans and professional law enforcement officers; and how well their decisions align with the team's, organization's, and profession's core values. From a value lens, it appears taking the suspect into custody would uphold the values of the profession, the police department, and the law enforcement profession.

3. *Decide on a best course of action.* The deputies weigh the pros and cons of each course of action (shoot or do not shoot), determine the most ethical course of action, and form the intentions to implement it.
4. *Act on that decision.* The deputies subdue and arrest the suspect.

The nature of dangerous situations leaders must face changes constantly as a result of technological, ideological, political, social, and economic changes. The malleable nature of our world—affected by social media, innovative technologies, asymmetric warfare, cyber attacks, and lack of formal hierarchies—will require leaders to respond to extraordinarily complex ethical dilemmas over incredibly short time frames. Ethically sound and well-rehearsed leaders with ingrained values need to be able to recognize these changes, identify the critical ethical elements in context, and make ethical decisions in a timely manner.

ALTERNATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

The ethical decision-making process is akin to the observe, orient, decide, and act (OODA) loop theorized by former U.S. Air Force colonel John Boyd.[11] The OODA loop framework requires leaders to be open-minded and aware of the ethical issue (observe), think critically and creatively to resolve the ethical issue effectively (orient), be decisive in selecting the most ethical course of action (decide), and follow through to implement the ethical action (act). The four-step OODA loop (figure 3.3) is remarkably similar to the four-step Rest model. The key to effective ethical decision making is having a common framework to systematically process ethical dilemmas and take ethical action.

Leaders must continuously sharpen their thinking skills and their ability to ethically reason to operate faster and more effectively using the Rest model or the OODA loop. First responders will be applying or displaying their character as they move through each part of the model or loop. The ability to improve one's thinking ability and the ability to reason and learn can be accomplished through education, training, and

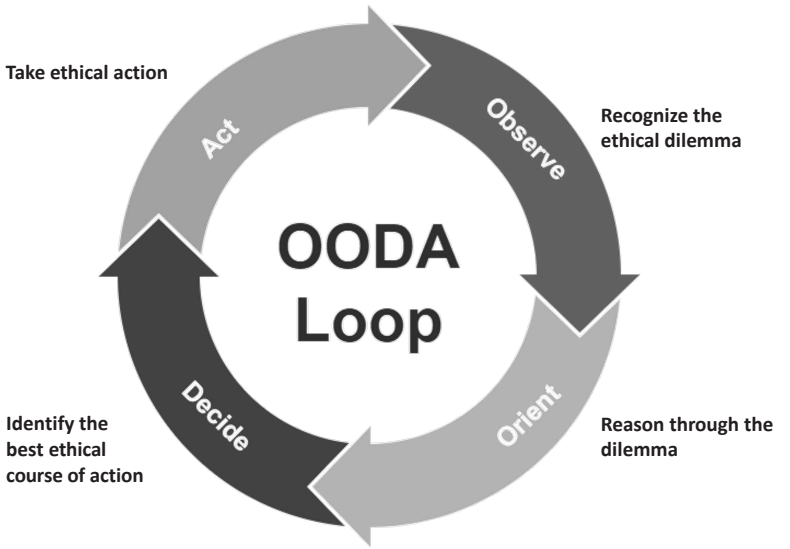

FIGURE 3.3. John Boyd's OODA Loop

practice. It requires harnessing one's cognitive strengths and mitigating one's cognitive limitations (both skills born of self-awareness and self-management). Self-management is one's ability to decide and choose how to behave in any given situation. Intentional and purposeful self-management should flow directly from and be an outcome of self-awareness.

Leaders operating in dangerous, complex, and uncertain environments must be conscious of ethical issues (be ethically sensitive and ethically aware). In many cases this consciousness seems intuitive; for example, whether to kill an unarmed, nonthreatening noncombatant or to use excessive force to arrest a suspect. However, consciousness of ethics is *not* innate or automatic. The first step is to raise the consciousness level of the leader to the *possibility* of ethical issues—being self-aware and ethically sensitive. Again, training, practice, and repetition are necessary. Next, we will address the challenges to ethical decision making and action.

CHALLENGES TO ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

We want to emphasize that it is possible to be in an unethical situation and not be aware of it, just as it is possible to decide to make an unethical decision.[12] This could be due to mindlessness, or to one of the handful of psychological, physical, or emotional constructs that result in moral/ethical disengagement.[13] Below are nine potential challenges that can impact leaders' ability to make ethical decisions or take ethical action, followed by what leaders can do to mitigate these challenges.

1. ***Authorization***: A particular behavior is or seems to be sanctioned, approved, or directed by the chain of command or the leaders. "I was just following orders," or "This is what my leader directed me to do."

Leader counters: Leaders have an obligation to follow all lawful and ethical directives, and a personal and professional responsibility to disobey all unethical directives. Also, leaders need to empower their people to express ethical concerns and refuse to obey unethical directives. One leader refusing to obey an unethical order can give others the strength to do so.[14]

2. ***Transfer of responsibility***: Some other person bears the responsibility for an unethical act. "Someone else is responsible," or "I [the leader] will assume responsibility."

   Leader counters: Leaders and all team members must understand that they are personally responsible for their actions, regardless of directives. People cannot transfer responsibility for their actions to others; they own them and must live with the consequences.[15]

3. ***Routinization***: People may be gradually acculturated to unethical actions or abuses, the slippery slope whereby unethical behavior simply becomes routine and is no longer considered or challenged. "It's just what we do." For instance, deputy sheriffs who think all citizens are bad people and use unnecessary force on them, and their leaders do nothing to stop them. The routine daily murder of "undesirables" by Nazi Germany during World War II is a classic example of routinization.

   Leader counters: Leaders and their teams are guardians of the organization's culture; thus they must hold others accountable for upholding the core values and standards. Allowing a small unethical action to go by without saying anything is shaping a new culture.

4. ***Dehumanization/disqualification***: People may lose respect for others "below them" and thereby be less concerned about the impacts of decisions on that group. Soldiers may feel that they are protecting or helping people they do not like and who are "not like them." During the Vietnam War, some soldiers used the word "gooks" to dehumanize the local people. Even the use of the word "inmates" can be used to dehumanize people in prison, thus making unethical action against them easier to justify.

   Leader counters: Leaders need to pay attention to how their teammates refer to and treat different groups of people. If a group of people is being dehumanized, this sets the conditions for members to treat this group in an unethical manner. Continuously remind your teammates of their responsibilities to be professional, to follow ROE, and to be aware of the organization's policies when interacting with various groups of people.[16]

5. ***Fatigue-induced moral disengagement***: People who are physically, mentally, psychologically, and emotionally stressed and exhausted are more likely to fail to identify ethical issues, cognitively disengage from ethical reasoning, or fail to muster the strength of will to take ethical action. This usually takes the form of self-deception, rationalization (the end justifies the means), or even mindlessness

or mind numbing. In some cases people may simply not think in terms of right and wrong, or may not be thinking at all—they are just acting without thinking about the ethical aspects of a decision. For example, overworked jailers often do not consider the ethics of their actions.

Leader counters: Leaders need to ensure that ethical considerations are part of their organization's formal decision-making process and rehearsals. Next, leaders need to ensure that all elements are properly staffed and have work schedules that allow for sufficient rest and breaks from the stress. When operating under stress, a leader should get an azimuth check from another teammate to ensure ethical action.

6. ***Bracketed morality***: A person may assign a separate set of values/beliefs in one context (while deployed or in a professional setting) and another set back in "the world." "What goes on in theater (or deployment) stays in theater."[17]

   Leader counters: Leaders need to continuously remind their team that their actions in all situations should reflect the organization's and their own core values. Leaders should act as role models for ethical actions both on and off duty and remind their people that they are professionals 24/7. Using standard decision-making processes to identify ethical issues, leaders communicating expectations for ethical actions, rehearsing ethical actions, and conducting after-action reviews that include ethics will communicate to members that ethical action is expected in all situations.

7. ***Misplaced loyalty***: People may place their loyalty to teammates (battle buddies) or the group/unit above the organization's values. A soldier commits an unethical act by dropping a weapon by an unarmed civilian to cover for a squad mate. In the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, the SWAT snipers could have shot and killed the suspect out of misplaced loyalty to their recently killed teammate.

   Leader counters: Leaders need to balance loyalty to their people with loyalty to the organization and profession. When these loyalties conflict due to ethics, leaders need to place loyalty to the organization's values and the standards of the profession first. This reinforces the ethical culture, upholds the legitimacy of the organization, maintains people's commitment to execute their duties in an ethical manner, and protects people from moral injury.[18]

8. ***Peer pressure***: The desire to be liked or accepted by the group may override a person's ability to think and act ethically. The SWAT vignette is an example of this; the SWAT snipers could have shot and killed the suspect because they felt peer pressure to avenge their fallen teammate.

   Leader counters: Leaders should have their people periodically reflect on their personal core values, their identity as professionals, and the trust placed in them by society. A strong professional identity and strong character will help people resist peer pressure to behave unethically. Furthermore, shaping a strong values-based

culture communicates that ethical action is important and provides social support for ethical action. Also, remind people that one person standing up to the peer pressure to behave unethically diminishes the perceived power of the social influence.[19]

9. ***Groupthink***: As with peer pressure, the weight of the group's ideas may override a person's ability to raise concerns or offer a dissenting voice, either due to a lack of moral courage or because they believe that if most of the others think that way, they must be right.

   Leader counters: To reduce the likelihood of groupthink, leaders can make sure that ethical consideration is part of the planning and decision-making processes. Furthermore, leaders can appoint a "devil's advocate" to enhance critical thinking pertaining to possible ethical issues. Finally, leaders should periodically remind team members of their duty to voice concerns about potentially unethical actions.[20]

Some of these points may be well outside the thought processes of a young deputy sheriff or soldier, but such people certainly can control their own response in these situations and attempt to influence others. Mid-level leaders should have some influence over external "noise" beyond their small sphere of influence, but leaders at all levels should still be aware of these potential problems. Leaders should seek to mitigate and control these nine challenges. Improving one's ethical sensitivity, as a pretext to ethical reasoning, should be the starting point.

A final point regarding decision making in uncertain situations. Heuristic processing is now in the mainstream of law enforcement discourse and training. Heuristic processing involves using situational cues to confirm mental models about a particular group of people. Once confirmed, these mental models influence routine action. For instance, if police officers are looking for an armed suspect dressed in dark clothing and they see a person who fits the description, they will respond to that person as the armed suspect. Likewise, a squad of soldiers out on patrol who hear a shot nearby will immediately implement the battle drill for contact. This type of heuristic, or "short-cut" thinking is necessary in dangerous and time-sensitive contexts.[21] But it can result in erroneous thinking and questionable ethical decision making, often as a result of any of the nine challenges listed above. As such, gaming potential ethical issues that are likely to be encountered, practicing ethical decision making, and rehearsing ethical actions help train the mind (create new mental models and learned responses) and mitigate the negative outcomes from bias that can be associated with heuristic processing.[22]

SUMMARY

Physical, mental, and emotional resilience are paramount for adaptive leaders facing the enormous amount of stress that dangerous and VUCA operating environments impose on them. How well they manage this stress will be determined by how well they are trained and how resilient they are.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Ethical decision making in dangerous contexts, when leaders and their teams may be physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted, requires training, education, and development over time. Enhancing leaders' ethical awareness is a key step in developing their ethical decision-making skills and abilities to take ethical action. We offer nine actions that leaders can take to train and develop their teams' ethical awareness, ethical decision-making skills, and abilities to take ethical action.

1. Establish an organizational culture that values ethical action.
2. Include ethical consideration in the formal planning process, rehearsals, and after-action reviews.
3. Ensure *every* training event has an ethical component in it and use the Rest model or the OODA loop to discuss ethical decision making and actions.
4. Ensure that *every* meeting reinforces the need for character- and competence-based trust by including discussions about ethical dilemmas and ethical decision making.
5. Encourage leaders to share the rationale for their decisions and explain how the organization's and their own values shaped them.
6. Teach and develop the skills of self-awareness, self-management, and ethical awareness using ethical vignettes, by gaming potential ethical issues, by sharing feedback from others, by participating in 360-degree assessments, and by providing classes on emotional intelligence.
7. Role-play positive and negative examples of ethical decision making.
8. Ensure that leaders are role models for character-based leadership and ethical decision making.
9. *Practice, practice, practice* ethical decision making and action so it becomes an automatic response.

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CHAPTER 4

Ten Years Later

What Leaders *Still* Should Know about Courage

PAUL B. LESTER AND CYNTHIA L. S. PURY

On the morning of March 16, 1968, WO1 Hugh Thompson Jr. flew above the hamlet of Son My, near the village of My Lai in the Republic of Vietnam, in support of U.S. Army ground operations. His mission was dangerous but routine: provide reconnaissance for a battalion task force searching for enemy forces. However, what he saw and did that day irrevocably changed his life.

The My Lai massacre is a well-documented stain on American military history. An infantry company led by Capt. Ernest Medina, Lt. William Calley, and others entered Son My and systematically murdered hundreds of Vietnamese civilians. Villagers were raped, bodies were mutilated, children were summarily executed in front of their parents. Seeing the carnage below, Thompson and his crew—Specialist Glenn Andreotta and Specialist Lawrence Colburn—placed their helicopter between the American forces and the villagers. Thompson dismounted from his pilot seat and instructed his crew to cover him with machine-gun fire if the Americans began firing at the group of civilians he intended to help. He was aware that the order put him at risk for a court-martial or possible injury. Thompson coaxed several Vietnamese from a bunker and on board evacuation helicopters, and later evacuated a wounded young boy to a Vietnamese military hospital. Upon returning to base, he reported the massacre to his superiors, who immediately ordered an end to hostilities in Son My.

Commanders repeatedly tried to cover up the My Lai massacre. In a ploy to keep him quiet, Thompson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions that day, though he later threw away the bogus citation because it stated his heroism had occurred during "intense crossfire" between friendly and enemy forces.

This, of course, was a lie—there was no crossfire; subsequent investigations found that the villagers were unarmed.

Thompson made his official report—he witnessed American soldiers kill unarmed Vietnamese civilians—and stuck by it despite intense pressure to recant. He repeatedly told his story to investigators, and he testified before the House Armed Services Committee, where he was lambasted for his actions. Committee chairman Mendel Rivers of South Carolina even stated that Thompson was the only person involved in the event who should be held accountable because he turned his weapons against fellow Americans. Rivers tried to have Thompson court-martialed, to no avail. Nevertheless, the damage was done, and Thompson received hate mail and death threats. Thompson's story, however, did not end with the investigation. He continued to fly in Vietnam and was shot down several times, breaking his back in the last crash and spending many months recovering in a hospital. Nevertheless, a broken back could not stop him—Thompson received a commission as an officer and continued to fly in the Army, retiring in 1983 as a major. However, the immediate years following My Lai were tough—he was shunned by fellow officers and labeled a turncoat.

The public's perception of Thompson began to change in the decades following My Lai. A letter-writing campaign gained traction, and he and his crew were eventually awarded the Soldier's Medal—the highest award for valor not involving enemy forces—a poignant replacement of the Distinguished Flying Cross he received during the cover-up. He received numerous civilian honors for his actions at My Lai, including the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award.

He spoke of My Lai and battlefield ethics often and lectured at the U.S. Military, Naval, and Air Force academies, though doing so took an emotional toll on him. Even after a terminal cancer diagnosis, Thompson pressed on with his message: common people can act with uncommon courage when necessary, and doing so can make a difference in the lives of many.

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH WE CONSIDERED REPLACING THIS VIGNETTE for the second edition of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations*, Hugh Thompson's multifaceted account of courage is as important today as it was fifty years ago. Hugh Thompson's courage not only placed him between murderers and the civilians of My Lai, but also extended to a wholly different context where his future and his professional reputation were at risk. Thus, he showed what many scholars would label physical courage—his actions in My Lai—*and* moral courage—standing up for what was right and continuing to push for the truth despite ostracism. In this chapter we explore the nature of courage, what it means to lead with courage, and how to foster courage in others. We define courage as freely taking a significant personal risk in pursuit of a noble and worthwhile goal and will explore what that

means from a practical standpoint.[1] Later, we delve into the link between leadership and courage and discuss how leaders can develop courage in others.

WHAT IS COURAGE?

Hugh Thompson acted courageously, although he—like many people who show courage—rarely if ever referred to his actions as courageous. Nevertheless, he acted, and we judge his actions to be courageous. But what exactly does it mean to be courageous?

In a series of carefully crafted studies of people's *implicit theories*, or the assumptions that people share about a topic, Christopher Rate and his colleagues first looked at definitions of courage from a range of sources: ancient philosophers, modern writers, psychologists, and others.[2] They considered commonalities and differences of the definitions, then had a group of laypeople and a group of experts rate them on possible shared features. They applied those features to vignettes and found that people rated the subjects of the vignettes as more courageous if they contained three features: (1) the action must be freely chosen, or *volitional*; (2) the act must be in *pursuit of a noble or worthwhile goal*; and (3) the actor must face *significant personal risk* due to external circumstances. How does the presence or absence of each of these features change how courageous an action seems to be? Let's start with free choice.

Free Choice (Volition)

An action showing volition is willingly, voluntarily, deliberately, and freely chosen from among other possible actions.[3] Hugh Thompson had multiple opportunities to choose an easier and less courageous path, such as continuing his assigned mission, telling a different story about the outcome, or letting the bogus award citation stand. Yet, he chose to speak out and tell the truth.

Unintentional actions are not typically deemed courageous, and the mere possibility that an action was not intentional diminishes its courageousness. For example, Marine sergeant Rafael Peralta was nominated for the Medal of Honor, the highest heroism decoration for U.S. military personnel, following a firefight in Iraq in 2004. He acted courageously several times during the firefight, but after being shot in the head, he pulled a live grenade toward himself, absorbing the blast and saving six other Marines. This final act was likely what led to his nomination for the Medal of Honor. However, forensic scientists found that the bullet in his head likely led to immediate brain damage, rendering Peralta incapable of intentional movements. Based in large part on this report, Peralta received a lower posthumous decoration, which was confirmed after an additional and extensive review of the case by investigators and pathologists.[4]

In a study in our own lab, we asked participants to describe a time they acted courageously and then followed up with multiple questions. "Why do you believe that your action was courageous?" was commonly (15 percent) answered with "the choice to take action." When asked "How could you have responded to that situation in a NONcourageous

manner?" 243 of the 250 participants agreed that they could have taken a different action (e.g., "I could have walked by and let the situation go on"). Most also indicated that this alternative action would have been easier than the action they actually took. Thus, most participants gave a clear description of an alternate and easier action open to them.[5]

Noble and Worthy Goal: Subjective Assessments and Social Norms

A courageous action is taken in pursuit of a noble and otherwise worthwhile goal. Nobility connotes moral principles and high ideals, whereas worthwhile implies value and importance. If Hugh Thompson had taken his stand against the massacre for a motivation beyond telling the truth and holding people accountable for their actions—for example, if he was motivated to write a book and profit from the story—then that would diminish our sense of his courage because the motivation for taking the action would not be noble. People take enormous risks for fame and money—Nik Wallenda walked across Niagara Falls and the Masaya Volcano in Nicaragua on a tightrope, Uli Emanuele jumped from an aircraft and used a wingsuit to fly through a two-meter-wide hole in a rock formation in Switzerland, and Evel Knievel attempted to jump the Snake River Canyon in a rocket cycle. These acts obviously required significant preparation and expertise, along with willingness to accept a significant amount of risk. But while these acts made for great entertainment, they also lacked an obvious sense of nobility, and their importance is certainly up for debate. Thus, pursuit of a worthwhile goal differentiates courage from "foolhardy" or "thrill-seeking" behaviors.

The research largely supports this assertion. For example, research findings suggest people believe their own courageous actions are taken in pursuit of important goals. When researchers asked 201 college students to describe a time they acted courageously, followed by an expanded and modified set of questions including "What were you trying to accomplish with this action? What was your goal?," all but 2 participants (99 percent) provided a clearly articulated and important goal. Moreover, participants rated these goals as very strongly meaningful and important at the time. Indeed, on a 0–10 scale, the most common answer to "How important was this goal to you at the time?" was 10.[6]

Within an organization, shared norms based on mission, expertise, and social factors are likely to influence both perceived risk of specific actions and perceived value of goals. Those working in physically dangerous environments will face elevated physical risk on the job compared with most people. But they also have the training, experience, and resources to handle such situations. Thus, taking on a certain level of risk to fulfill unit missions is expected rather than exceptional; it is "part of the job." Many heroism awards cite "actions above and beyond the call of duty," because those actions transcend the typical expectations of those serving in such a role. As a police officer we know put it, if he disarms a criminal, he is just doing his job. But if an unarmed civilian disarms a criminal, that person is likely to be hailed as a hero. Saying an action is courageous also implies the person making the attribution agrees with the goal of the action.[7] At a more

basic level, citations for courage commonly make the case for the goodness of the action taken. Individuals involved in risky actions that cannot be publicly endorsed, or perhaps even acknowledged, thus might not be easily cited for valor.

Indeed, the nobility and value of the goal, along with the risk to the actor, are subjective assessments made both by the actor and by others who judge the behavior. And while there are societal norms that help us decide if an act is courageous, they do not always properly align with the times. For example, prior to the Vietnam War, wartime service was typically heralded in the United States as courageous; and it largely still is today. As the war in Vietnam unfolded, however, some people with strong antiwar beliefs attributed more courage to those who refused to serve (the "draft dodgers") than they did to those who fought in Vietnam. For those against the war, refusing to serve and risking criminal prosecution and ostracism for dodging the draft were more courageous than risking their lives in Vietnam.[8] Would the servicemembers who fought in Vietnam in place of draft dodgers see it the same way? Almost certainly not. A controlled empirical study in which the perceived courageousness of pro-choice or antiabortion protesters depended on the observer's opinion of both abortion and free speech showed a similar phenomenon.[9]

This highlights an important paradox. Because the ability to determine if an act is noble and worthwhile is subjective, one could argue that courage is so much "in the eye of the beholder" that it does not exist. We disagree with this assertion and point out that some attributions of courage can be misplaced and inappropriate, as can the means used to attempt to meet a goal. Terrorists, for example, should not be considered courageous, because while they may see their goal as noble, they pursue that goal via objectively evil means (i.e., killing innocent civilians).[10] Therefore, the means one uses to pursue a noble and worthwhile goal matters, because attributions of courage are likely influenced by how the attributors view the ethicality of the means employed during the action. The violent insurrection that occurred at the U.S. Capitol in January 2021 illustrates this point quite clearly. Most Americans—and we count ourselves among them—view the rioters' behavior as criminal acts aimed at forcefully overturning a valid election; thus, the risks they took were neither noble nor worthwhile. Sadly, others with a decidedly different worldview cast these individuals as devoted "patriots" and "heroes" willing to risk their freedom for their deeply flawed cause. Instances of such "bad courage"—when an actor takes a personal risk for an objectively bad reason—have occurred before.[11] Assigning an attribution of courage to an act becomes easier when the act is in pursuit of a clearly noble and worthwhile goal; it becomes harder when the goal and means used to achieve that goal are ethically questionable.

Significant Personal Risk

Scholars generally agree that for an action to be deemed courageous, it must take place despite threatening or dangerous risks facing the actor. Most heroism citations include extensive descriptions of risks faced by those being decorated. As with assessing the

nobility of a goal, gauging the level of risk is admittedly subjective. Military and public safety organizations typically have a hierarchy of awards associated with taking action despite increasing degrees of risk, although clearly defined standards for these awards are rarely published. For example, Executive Order 9419 established the Bronze Star for someone who "distinguishes, or has distinguished, himself by heroic . . . service . . . against an enemy of the United States." The next higher award for heroism—the Silver Star—was established by Congress to recognize "gallantry in action . . . against an enemy of the United States." The difference between "heroic service" and "gallantry in action" is open to interpretation, but it is safe to say that both are exceedingly rare if the award statistics from the Global War on Terror are used as a gauge. While more than 3 million military servicemembers deployed on more than 6 million individual combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan in the last 20 years, the Silver Star has been awarded only 1,007 times (~0.016 percent).[12]

Significant personal risk can certainly extend beyond the combat soldier or the police officer walking a beat; risk can take a lot of forms. Hugh Thompson's report on My Lai can only be seen as courageous given the risks to his career and the subsequent threats he received. In fact, whistleblowers—those who bring to light unethical behaviors in organizations—are often castigated in the press and threatened by the public. For example, Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman saw his military career abruptly shortened because he responded to a legally valid subpoena to provide testimony about allegations of unethical behavior by the president of the United States. Vindman was aware of the risks to his career ahead of his testimony and was later fired from his job on the National Security Council for "insubordination." He ultimately retired from the Army—despite being selected for promotion to colonel—because the promotions of hundreds of others were being held up by partisan members of Congress due to his name also being on the promotion list.

Types of Courage

Although many different types of courage are recognized, the most robust distinction is between physical courage and moral courage.[13] Physical courage—commonly referred to as heroism—typically involves taking a physical risk, such as rescuing a drowning victim or saving a wounded comrade during a firefight. Moral courage, on the other hand, typically involves taking a social risk in support of one's beliefs, such as confronting a superior about misdeeds or challenging an unfair policy. This distinction may have come about because certain types of risks are more likely to co-occur with certain types of goals. Other courageous actions blur the line between physical courage and moral courage. Civil rights protesters marching with the knowledge that others were killed for similar actions or a military recruit volunteering to serve after the 9/11 attacks don't fit neatly into a single category but are nonetheless courageous.

Two other conceptualizations of courage are likely germane to those working in dangerous contexts. Philosopher Daniel Putman has proposed *psychological courage*—the

willingness to face emotional instability to obtain one's goals—as a separate form of courageous action.[14] Psychological courage is exemplified by patients who risk psychological pain to confront mental health problems, such as PTSD, following exposure to trauma. Here, having psychological courage is important because it triggers the individual to take the first steps in getting well and perhaps returning to duty. Psychological courage also extends to people overcoming phobias in pursuit of a goal. For example, a soldier with acrophobia (fear of heights) must make efforts to overcome this phobia in order to serve in the 82nd Airborne Division, because jumping out of airplanes is a job requirement in that unit. A related construct, *vital courage*, involves mustering the strength needed to cope with physical illness or other impairments.[15] Vital courage can be found in wounded veterans, police officers, and other public safety professionals who return to duty despite significant injuries. For example, Col. Greg Gadson lost both legs in Afghanistan, yet continued to serve in the Army for another seven years and held additional command positions after his injuries; Maj. Scott Smiley was wounded by a suicide car bomb and completely lost his sight, yet he continued to serve in the Army, earned an MBA from Duke, and went on to teach leadership at West Point. Thus, one component of vital courage is the willingness to place oneself at risk to overcome physical impairments that would sideline most people in pursuit of continuing the vitality of life.

Simple categorization of acts into a single type of courage can become messy, however, because they often co-occur. While categorizing courage depends on the pairing of risks and goals, real life events rarely line up nicely, and multiple forms of courage blend together as people pursue complicated goals. For example, in military settings in which pursuing mental health treatment risks ostracism, as was common in the first few years of the Global War on Terror and persists to a lesser degree even today, getting help for PTSD may require taking the risks of moral courage to push back against biases, social pressures, and barriers to care; psychological courage to seek care in the first place; and vital courage to continue to serve while receiving care.[16] We suggest that blended courage may cover other situations as well, so the main takeaway for leaders here is to be able to identify the various indicators of courage so those taking such action can be recognized and those behaviors reinforced in organizations.

Is Fear a Necessary Part of Courage?

Fear as a prerequisite for courageous behavior is somewhat debatable. Many early psychological concepts of courage required the individual to feel fear. For example, researchers have suggested that courage occurs when one overcomes the sentiment of fear in pursuit of something noble.[17] Germane to courage in dangerous situations, scholars have pointed to needing to overcome the physiological symptoms of fear (e.g., startle response, increased heart rate, sweaty palms) in order to take courageous action,[18] while others have framed it as "persistence or perseverance despite having fear. It takes courage to engage and persist in a terrifying activity. By definition, fear is necessary

for someone to display courage."[19] According to these definitions, one must have an emotional experience of fear to be considered courageous. Alternatively, it may be that courage requires awareness of risk rather than fear per se. For many people, awareness of personal risk leads quickly and directly to the emotion of fear, but this may not be true for everyone.

If fear is a required part of courage, then many individuals and actions we might like to characterize as courageous fall short. For example, a group of behavioral scientists conducted an experiment in which they asked decorated bomb disposal operators and a control group of soldiers who had not been cited for heroism to perform a series of stressful tasks while connected to devices to measure physiological fear reactions (e.g., heart rate and sweat); failure to perform the tasks correctly resulted in a painful electric shock. Compared with nondecorated soldiers, decorated soldiers had lower subjective and physiological levels of fear. Although only one study, the results suggest that if fear is a necessary part of courage, the group that was decorated for valor was better described as fearless rather than courageous.[20]

Proponents who view fear as integral to courage suggest that courage is a steppingstone to fearlessness.[21] One likely scenario is that fear may be part of *courage as a process*; that is, the way in which an individual goes about taking a (possibly) courageous action. The greater the subjective sense of risk and fear, the less likely the person is to take the action.[22] Some people may have a higher threshold for experiencing fear, and thus may be more likely to perform well in extremely risky situations. Further, viewing yourself as someone who does not give into fear may also lead to more courageous behavior.[23]

However, fear does not seem to be a typical part of *courage as an accolade*, or the process by which observers perceive an action as more or less courageous. Those who thrive in dangerous working environments are typically seen as courageous by the civilian population, but research suggests that they have a lower typical level of fear.[24] Citations for courage do not typically describe the fear experienced by the individual taking the action, but rather focus on good that the person did and the risks taken to do it.[25]

Goal Attainment and Judgments of Courage

The extent to which an action is successful can also influence its perceived courageousness. The Carnegie Hero Medal is most commonly awarded to individuals who saved the lives of others, but not to those who merely attempted to save a life.[26] When asked to describe a courageous action they have either performed or witnessed, the overwhelming majority of participants listed an action that made the situation a good deal better and not at all worse. And when asked to rate the courageousness of both successful and failed actions, participants rated successful actions as significantly more courageous than failed ones. This was true even when it was clear that the failure had nothing to do with the individual's action or limitations.[27] Thus, when the goal of an action is not attained, people may discount the courage it took to make the attempt.

LEADERS: WHY BEING COURAGEOUS MATTERS

Understanding the scholarly terrain of courage is helpful if you hope to lead with courage. And if you are reading this book, then you are likely a leader or someone who wants to become a leader, and the contexts in which you will lead will, at times, be dangerous. As stated previously, courage is that quality that allows someone to voluntarily pursue noble goals despite significant personal risks. Both the goals and the risks might be quite apparent in some contexts, such as rescuing someone from a burning building or a car wreck. They may be less obvious in the courage it takes to lead with integrity despite social and organizational pressure to do the wrong thing; or in the courage it takes to admit that one needs counseling following a traumatic exposure. It also is a label we apply after an action if it is seen as good and the dangers significant.

Given the complexities of leading in dangerous contexts, opportunities to act courageously will likely emerge. You may have the opportunity to save a baby from a burning building; you may uncover unethical behavior and blow the whistle; you may be wounded but choose to stay with your unit to continue the mission. In any event, though, most leaders find themselves orchestrating events toward mission completion. Stated another way, you—the leader—cannot be everywhere during a ground combat mission, during a four-alarm fire, or while executing a high-risk warrant on a fugitive; you must rely on your followers to do what is required. Thus, a pressing question emerges: Are your *followers* prepared to act courageously in your absence? Even more pressing: What have *you* done to prepare your followers to act courageously? And what can you do to support them for having acted with courage?

The Organization's Culture and Context

We propose that preparing followers to be courageous starts with a leader's behavior and is reinforced by the organization. Organizational values and mission statements assist leaders in developing followers' courage. For example, personal courage is one of the seven core values of the U.S. Army and a common value in public safety or other military organizations.[28] These organizations publicly state that courage is "part of the job." At the user level, a platoon leader or police sergeant may be able to leverage organizational culture to bolster courageous behavior in many ways. For example, he or she may recognize and reward physical courage during physical training or while performing drills, moral courage when soldiers or patrolmen in their charge are mistreated by more senior leadership, and psychological courage with a general acknowledgment that seeking help for stress symptoms is the right thing to do.

Simply including courage as an organizational value will not always result in courageous behavior of others, but it is a step in the right direction. As we have noted, courage is a complex phenomenon, but including courage as a value is a *signal of expectations* for others to consider. Such signals can be an effective form of pressure that results in courageous behavior.

LEADER ACTIONS FOR FOSTERING COURAGE

Though history plays an important role in setting organizational culture, leaders also help shape culture and set standards of behavior. At the individual and group levels, transformational leadership theory and authentic leadership theory both suggest leaders serve as role models and are emulated by followers.[29] Additionally, other scholars have suggested that courage can be developed through a variety of structured approaches, one being through mentorship relationships focused on courage development and discussion.[30] Likewise, they point out that deliberate, repeated, challenging, and realistic training in military, police, firefighter, and other public service sectors results in behavior that observers would call courageous. Below are some suggestions on ways leaders can promote courage.

Serve as a Role Model

Research on social learning and social cognitive theories has repeatedly shown that people learn by watching others.[31] These theories suggest three key concepts impacting courage development: (1) individuals can learn behaviors through observation; (2) attention, retention, reproduction, and motivational processes may influence courage development; and (3) practice—or enactive mastery—role-modeling, vicarious learning, social pressure and persuasion, and arousal likely impact courage development in followers. We examine these concepts below.

Promote learning through observation. Research on social learning suggests that there are several pathways for effective observational learning. First, a stimulus must hold an individual's attention long enough for processing to occur in order to learn from it. Simple exposure to an event may not be enough for learning if the individual does not recognize the event as important or interesting. Second, individual differences matter greatly in social learning. People must be able to retain what they learn, which suggests that factors such as intelligence matter to the process. Likewise, they must be able to reproduce what they learn, suggesting that individual skill sets or physical abilities may matter, and that people must have the cognitive ability to transfer what they observe into their own behavior. Finally, individuals must be motivated to reproduce the observed behavior based on extrinsic rewards (e.g., money, recognition) or intrinsic rewards (e.g., personal satisfaction, such as knowing that the behavior was "the right thing to do").[32]

Given the pathways described above, one may surmise that learning to be courageous is an individual's responsibility using attention, intelligence, and skill sets. We also know that leaders set the tone for an organization, so they can establish the conditions for learning about courage by drawing attention to in situ courageous acts during training and in operational contexts; leading discussions about historical figures who acted courageously; bringing guest speakers into the organization to recount their own courageous moments; and asking the team to reflect upon how they might act in a similar situation.

Practice Being Courageous

Promote hands-on practice. Repeated practice, or mastery experiences, may lead to courage development. Indeed, past performance is one of the best predictors and enhancers of future performance.[33] We propose that leaders can deliberately create training environments that call for courageous action, then provide trainees (followers) with structured feedback to assist with meaning making and to drive home the necessity of courage in certain contexts.

There are two forms of mastery: guided mastery and cognitive mastery modeling.[34] Guided mastery consists of instruction geared to transfer skills and knowledge (e.g., teaching), guided perfection of those skills (e.g., coaching and mentoring), and use of the skills and knowledge in a particular context (e.g., application). Leaders can leverage guided mastery pathways toward courage by providing the resources followers need to be courageous, reinforcing those resources with coaching or mentorship, and providing positive feedback.[35] This drives home the necessity of deliberate, tough, and realistic training scenarios.[36] As one would expect, research in high-stress contexts has shown that such practical training leads to more successful outcomes, possibly via reducing perceptions of risk and/or increasing the skills needed to perform despite risks.[37]

Promote mental practice. While training event participation is ideal, time or resource constraints may prevent active training. When this is the case, cognitive mastery modeling allows individuals to think through behaviors prior to actual performance.[38] In such mental rehearsals an individual observes a model performing a given task and then visualizes his or her own performance in the same task. This type of rehearsal is common in a variety of contexts—such as sports and public speaking—because it helps to form and habituate scripts to be called upon during performance. Likewise, mental rehearsals have direct application in preparing for contexts requiring courage. Specifically, mental rehearsals may bolster a courageous mindset by reducing fear when individuals are exposed to risk.[39] Take, for example, a mountain climber about to begin a very technical climb that requires a series of dynamic leaps because some of the handholds are out of reach. Simulating these moves usually cannot provide enough realism because the height, distance of the leap, and unique shape of the handhold cannot be fully replicated. Instead, the climber watches videos of other climbers successfully negotiating the section and envisions herself doing the same thing. When the climber actually faces that technical section of the mountain, her fear is controllable because she mentally rehearsed it and has a sense that she has already climbed the section several times. Thus, more realistic training is more likely to reduce perception of risk and boost efficacy.

Promote vicarious learning. Like mental rehearsals, vicarious learning is another method that a leader may employ to develop courage in followers. Although similar to informal role-modeling, vicarious learning situations are deliberately constructed so that followers observe a relevant role model performing the task, then replicate the task without rehearsal.[40] For the vicarious learning exercise to work, however, there needs to be a

comparable profession match between the role model and observer. For example, vicarious learning works better when police officers are watching scenarios enacted by other police officers, because they can see themselves doing something similar. Should a police officer observe an accountant taking a stand against unethical billing practices, the effect simply will not be the same.[41] Likewise, the role model must be credible, trustworthy, and important to the observer.[42] This last point is common sense for most experienced leaders, especially those who have served in dangerous situations, but it does speak to a larger truism about leading people when lives are at risk.

In dangerous situations, leaders must be willing to put themselves at risk if they expect followers to do the same, and some research suggests that followers view physical courage (heroism) as a necessary leadership competency.[43] This is not to say that leaders should unnecessarily place themselves or their followers at risk in an attempt to appear courageous; that could be suicidal. This kind of conduct—foolhardy behavior—is what some scholars refer to as *foolish courage* because the associated risk is too costly.[44] Rather, the adage "be willing to do what you expect your followers to do" comes to mind. Though leaders must carefully balance placing themselves at risk to prove to followers that they can be courageous with serving in their particular role during a mission, leaders can still actively model physical and moral courage in training and operational environments.

For example, it is common practice for a Special Forces A Team leader to be the first person out of the aircraft on a high-altitude low-opening (HALO) jump. Leading from the front drives home the "follow me" attitude endemic in organizations that routinely place themselves at risk.[45] Such behavior can be a double-edged sword, however, so leaders should keep a few things in mind related to role responsibilities and organizational expectations. Specifically, leaders should remember that while they should be willing and able to accept the risks of leading from the front in dangerous situations, they should also be where they can have the most influence in that situation. Sometimes that means not leading from the front, but instead empowering subordinate leaders during execution. Also, leaders at different echelons and tenures will likely be expected to role-model different types of courage within organizations. For example, a police sergeant leading a team to serve a high-risk warrant would likely be expected to be among the first to enter the premises, but one would not necessarily expect to see the chief doing that. In a similar vein, while we would hope that same police sergeant would take a stand against unethical police behavior (showing moral courage), our expectations for action would grow significantly for the police chief because a chief's duty is to uphold and role-model ethical behavior.

Use social persuasion and feedback. Social persuasion, positive feedback, and other forms of coaching provide another route toward developing courage in followers. Persuasion and feedback are known to lead to significant shifts in attitudes.[46] We also suggest that a systematic approach toward coaching and counseling that makes courage a central topic of discussion could increase self-efficacy (confidence) and self-attributions (affirmations) toward courage. Here, the leader—serving as coach and counselor—has an opportunity to

share experiences with the follower and discuss personal values as they relate to courage. Indeed, that courage and values are intertwined is not a new concept, and researchers and philosophers alike believe that values play a central role in promoting courage by clarifying and aligning goals and effort.[47]

Peer pressure and social comparison bolster social persuasion's impact on courage development. For example, research on the bystander effect showed that individuals in a group tended to avoid risk unless the threat compelled them to take action.[48] This points toward individuals acting courageously for the group if the risk is great enough. Returning to organizational and social norms, peer pressure and social comparisons can be leveraged toward courageous behavior given that our self-esteem is related to how effectively we are able to match our own behavior with that of role models and organizational norms.[49] Therefore, followers who serve in organizations where courage is the norm may feel compelled to act courageously because they fear being ostracized by the group.

For example, it is not hard to imagine a fireman who, although afraid, still runs into the burning building. The fireman is motivated to do so for a lot of reasons—sense of duty, wanting to save lives, and so on—but social pressures such as not wanting to let others down and fear of being cast aside by the organization are also in play. Here again, the role of leadership linking social persuasion and feedback to courage development is clear. Over and above establishing courage as a central organizational value and norm, a leader must also serve as meaning maker, coach, and counselor for followers, driving home what is expected in situations calling for courage. The leader should not shrug off followers' concerns about fear; indeed, such instances are "teachable moments." The leader-follower bond could be strengthened by the leader explaining that he or she also feels fear, and then describing the tools needed to overcome it. In situ, the leader can also provide immediate, positive feedback when the follower performs courageously, which serves to reinforce the behavior and increases the likelihood of future courageous behavior.

The leader should tap into formal institutional rewards (e.g., medals and commendations) awarded for courageous actions. Organizations may nominate members for medals following heroic action because the members deserve public recognition for their courage, yet there are implications for the organization in doing so as well. Senior organizational leaders should recognize courage because it sets a high standard that other members should strive toward. It reinforces the value of an individual's behavior as a significant contribution toward mission completion, and thus signals that the behavior should be emulated when the right context emerges.

Use Your Ability to Inspire and Motivate Cautiously

One final leader influence, beyond social learning theory, is inspirational motivation, where the follower makes an emotional link to the leader. A leader's actions or words

can help spur courageous action by encouraging followers to act. Martin Luther King's actions and speeches during the civil rights movement inspired an entire nation to change. Eisenhower's comments on D-day—"We are about to embark upon this Great Crusade . . . the eyes of the world are upon you"—preceded a historic battle that led to sixteen servicemembers receiving the Medal of Honor and many more receiving Distinguished Service Crosses and Silver Stars. This is not to imply that there is a causal link between a leader's words and the heroic or other courageous actions of others, but simply to state that a leader's words help frame the gravity of a particular situation and set expectations.

A note of caution is warranted here, however, because this emotional link is a knife that cuts both ways. As suggested in attachment theory, followers have a deep-seated need to form strong relationship bonds with attachment figures such as leaders.[50] And these needs are often stronger when the attachment figure is charismatic, which helps to explain a range of both positive and negative behaviors by followers. While their bond with a leader may compel them to act courageously (i.e., they want to emulate their leader), this bond may explain why followers are willing to engage in foolhardy and often deadly behavior that serves no greater good or in fact is negative.[51] For example, Hitler used his charisma and oratory skills to lead his nation into a world war and convince many of his followers to commit genocide. Rev. Jim Jones' followers drank—and made their children drink—poisoned Kool-Aid at his urging, and more than nine hundred of them died.[52] These examples illustrate the need for leaders to be mindful that their words may translate to a physiological and emotional arousal that can be taken too far and lead to actions by their followers that the leader cannot control. Thus, within dangerous contexts specifically, we recommend that leaders choose their words carefully and focus on the nobility of the task before them, and remind followers that they have been trained to respond appropriately in risky situations and that they will be trusted to do what is right. As a leader, it is incumbent upon you as well to ensure the nobility of the goals you are asking others to pursue.

SUMMARY

Despite several thousand years of philosophical analysis, our understanding of courage and its development as a complex psychological phenomenon continues to evolve. There are several forms of courage, and how they function is as different as their conceptualizations. Where they conceptually converge, however, is that all three require deliberate risk taking toward some perceived noble cause, separating the noble forms of courage from foolhardy behaviors, foolish courage, and bad courage. Additionally, we described how individuals can lead with courage and how they might develop courage in others. We suggest that while organizations can assist leaders in developing followers' courage—after all, courage is the raison d'être of many public safety and military organizations—it is the leader who can and must shepherd the courage development process along.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Provide tough, realistic training for the duties your followers will need to perform, along with the feedback that can help them internalize the idea of themselves as competent, courageous actors.
2. Share experiences with followers and explicitly discuss their relation to courage.
3. Role-model the kind of behaviors you want your followers to emulate, including courageous behavior.
3. When one of your followers acts courageously, provide immediate positive feedback. If he or she is eligible for an organizational commendation based on the action, take the time to complete the nomination promptly.
4. Consider what types of courage are recognized in your unit. Do you recognize and reward moral or vital courage? Courage is often rare, so ensure that you recognize it regardless of its form.
5. Be aware that both the value of the goal and the risks endured to pursue the goal have a subjective component. When making attributions about courage, leaders should consider the nobility of the goal, the ethical means employed to meet that goal, and the relative risk assumed by taking the action.

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CHAPTER 5

Understanding and Managing Stress

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LEADERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO LEAD IN DANGEROUS CONTEXTS, are a powerful force in managing and alleviating the effects of stress. This chapter discusses how to leverage that force, describing stress management practices beyond the stalwarts of individual fitness, sleep, and good health habits. We present theory along with the context of real-world cases to make leaders aware of the nature and effects of the decisions to be made while preparing for or leading in dangerous situations and how to assess and respond to critical incidents. The main lesson is that leaders must know their people, know the crucible in which they operate, establish a culture of catharsis, and know that they are a principal source of resilience.

WHAT DOES STRESS ENTAIL?

The term "stress" first appeared circa 1300, in part as a shortening of the noun "distress," and was used to convey physical hardship.[1] Although there are earlier sporadic examples of the term used in a psychological context,[2] it did not assume a widely accepted psychological connotation until the work of Walter Cannon and Hans Selye in the late 1920s. As Selye's theory gained popularity, stress came to refer to an overall stressor or stress-response relationship.[3] With the increase in the term's usage across the lexicon, stress has become a convenient semantic category accommodating an expanding family of behaviors, feelings, and experiences associated with psychological or physical complaint and life's conditions. Although the term lacks the specificity required in scientific inquiry or diagnosis, its use in the general lexicon does provide an opportunity to hear the stress metaphors within an organization's culture to determine specific effects and potential remedies.[4] Examples of such metaphors include the complaints described in the symptoms of culture- and generation-bounded syndromes.[5]

In the mid-1970s, a U.S. Army clinic started seeing young, healthy males who were withdrawing from life, hiding in their rooms, and deteriorating in their performance. At

the clinic, these individuals often were crying, screaming that they simply could not deal with the Army anymore, and shaking their limbs and bodies almost convulsively. Initial presentation involved complaints of limb numbness and tingling. Healthcare providers in the clinic came up with a usable, albeit catchall diagnosis: "adjustment reaction of adult life." Upon further investigation, the condition's manifestations were found to be almost exclusively confined to a population of young (eighteen- and nineteen-year-old) Puerto Rican males who had never before been off their island and were involved in their first operational assignment. In discussing this with one of the unit's noncommissioned officers (NCOs), who was also Puerto Rican, clinic staff were told that the men's reaction was a normal means of expressing stress on the island among this population group, and that it was worse when they were not in contact with females (the implication was that Puerto Rican females, through social influence, modulate the response). The presentation was initially suspected to be some kind of group hysteria, but as explained, it was a culturally modified stress reaction. The clinic staff arranged for the NCO, his wife, and his wife's friends to meet with the soldiers individually. The problem did not recur, at least not to the knowledge of the clinic staff.[6]

Organizations likewise have means to express stress either as catharsis or as distress.[7] The leader should come to understand the language and manifestations unique to the organization to discern the cathartic nature of complaints, as happened in the above episode, from those indicating distress. A short video, *The Ugly of War*, is helpful in that regard.[8] Note the soldier's mannerisms and choice of words. In the end, the soldier, who is a medic, says that his mental health community "does not understand," referring to the difference between catharsis and distress. As with the young Puerto Rican males, in order to help, a leader must understand and be able to discern the difference between expressions of catharsis and those of distress.

COMMUNICATING HEALTH RISKS

Associated with war are symptom clusters that appear as "syndromes," with confounding etiologies.[9] E. Jones and colleagues researched British military pension files dating from 1872 through 1991 and found three varieties of postcombat disorder: a debility syndrome (weakness/loss of energy) without psychological or cognitive symptoms, associated with wars fought before 1918; a somatic syndrome involving cardiorespiratory symptoms (e.g., rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, fatigue, etc.) associated with World War I; and a neuropsychiatric syndrome (e.g., depression, anxiety, headaches, etc.) associated with World War II through the 1991 Gulf War. There was no presentation of common symptoms across the various wars studied, although there were overlapping complaints. None of the syndromes identified could be linked to a definitive etiologic agent or uniquely identifiable trauma.[10] This led researchers to implicate cultural factors as contributing to these unexplainable illnesses, thought to be precipitated by the aggregate stressors of deployment.[11] This is not to say that psychological trauma is not real; there is certainly a relationship

between traumatic events and psychological sequelae.[12] Communicated complaints, however, are often confounded with a group's accepted cathartic expressions, preexisting conditions,[13] the common health fears of the time, reinforcing factors for expressing particular symptoms (compensation expectation), and trends in diagnostic labeling (PTSD and mTBI, mild traumatic brain injury). This is not to diminish the complaints, but simply to ensure that other etiologic factors are not ignored, or the complaints misinterpreted as being outside a range of normal.[14] Complaints must be taken seriously, but "syndromes" must be defined carefully, and any proposed causes must be continually evaluated. The lesson for a leader is to express caring and concern and help frame the complaints as a normal reaction to an extreme situation. This strategy, of course, is only applied if the person is not a threat to mission, themselves, or others. In genuinely caring, the leader is ensuring unit morale, cohesion, and esprit, which are essential to the well-being of those operating in dangerous situations.[15]

Ensuring unit morale, cohesion, and esprit benefits the subordinates as well as the leader. In a personal communication to Andrea Peters, an officer recounted the following experience. "I was an Army lieutenant at the time, and as the highest-ranking team member during an elite Army training course, I was the team's leader."[16] The team found themselves maneuvering in unfamiliar terrain on an extremely dark night at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. "I had the map, then we heard a scream, and the bump, when he hit the bottom." The sounds were that of the team's radio operator, who carried the small unit's radio on his back, falling off the side of a cliff. "Immediately, I felt responsible." The team leader dealt with the guilt and perceived failure of letting his team down. Throughout the ordeal and specifically once it was determined that the soldier was not severely injured and could continue the mission, the noncommissioned officer (NCO) leaders provided empathy and concern to the team leader and helped him stay mentally and physically focused so he could lead the team to the next location within the specified timeline.

This example speaks to the caring nature of a leader and the affirmation of the reactions as a normal progression through a time of stress. This training incident also speaks to how a truly cohesive team will respond to their leader with caring, concern, and empathy to help manage stress and to complete the mission and strengthen bonds, ensuring the "Factor X" that makes a unit truly elite.[17] The strength of a unit, as Tolstoy pointed out, is not solely in its number. A unit's strength is augmented by its spirit—in other words, by its morale, cohesion, and esprit. Genuine care and concern strengthen unit morale and cohesion, as evidenced by the NCO stepping up to provide the same for the team leader. In managing stress within an organization, the leader has two powerful tools: the placebo and Hawthorne effects, referred to as caring and concern, respectively.[18]

Forms of depression are frequently associated with dangerous-context-related stress. One of the most effective treatments for mild to moderate depression is the placebo effect.[19] A placebo is a harmless substance or procedure used for psychological benefit. Potential sources of such placeboes include nutraceuticals, functional foods, and

alternative medicines. Nutraceuticals are dietary supplements that may provide prevention and treatment of illness or disease. (In the United States, the federal Food and Drug Administration regulates health claims with the psychological benefit attested to by popular use.)[20] These and other complementary and alternative medicines are often reported to alleviate symptoms.[21] The leader should be supportive of such practices but careful not to promote one practice over another. Certainly a leader may offer potentially effective alternatives, because a simple suggestion from an authority figure and a means for the individual to take control can have profound positive effects.[22] If the alternative practice does no harm, then an individual's faith in the practice should not be undermined.[23]

The Hawthorne effect is the generation of positive responses that occurs because members of an organization feel that leaders care or are concerned about them.[24] An organization can leverage this effect through several organizational and individual-level programs. These include but are not limited to establishing mentor relationships, integrating members into cohesive teams, and implementing well-being and self-awareness programs.[25] In sum, the social and cognitive components that shape the manifestation of stress-related complaints lend themselves to remedies involving the tools of the placebo and Hawthorne effects, which a leader can use for effective stress management strategies.

STRESS THEORY

A leader confronted with a problem can neither act nor decide effectively without first understanding the problem. The problem, in this case, is managing stress in dangerous contexts to maintain individual and unit well-being. As discussed above, however, the word "stress" has evolved into a convenient semantic category used to attribute a cause to a range of health outcomes from transient moods to chronic ill health. To make sense of the collection of ideas engendered by stress one can apply theory in a pragmatic sense. Although less than a law of nature, theory provides a systematic framework from which solutions to problems can be discerned.

Theories of stress can be nominally classified as emphasizing physiological homeostasis, cognition, and memory; or managing stressors within the dangerous context. Each of the theories predicts and explains the relationship between antecedents and consequences of stress, but with a different emphasis and set of presuppositions. The reason for the differences is, as with all theories, the desire to balance prediction and explanation. The dilemma that researchers, practitioners, and leaders face is how to organize observations and outcomes into a systematic body of knowledge to explain outcomes while avoiding contradictions in predictions, practice, and management. The best way to avoid this dilemma is to understand and consistently apply the presuppositions from which predictions and decisions are made, judge the effects on beneficence, and treat the theory or practice as "a way" and not "the way."[26]

Physiological Homeostasis

The concept of homeostasis is rooted in the pre-Socratic philosophy of Hippocrates, which equated health to a balance of the elements and qualities of life.[27] Claude Bernard (mid-1800s) refined this concept of homeostasis to define the relatively narrow physiological limits within which the body operates.[28] He articulated the importance to the body of maintaining a relatively constant internal state (milieu intérieur) when being challenged with a constantly changing external environment. The idea of the milieu intérieur led to the concept of stress developed by Walter Cannon and furthered by Hans Selye: "stress is any challenge to the relative constant internal state."[29]

Cannon defined two states in response to stress that can be metaphorically described as "rest/digest" and "fight/flight."[30] These states are adaptive in that the physiological cascade energizes the body to react to the threat through the well-modulated system that protects homeostasis. Some argue for modifying the cascade associated with the fight/fight response to improve postcritical incident well-being.[31] The risk, however, is in rendering the individual ill-prepared to perform in or learn from a dangerous situation, threatening mission success and individual survival.[32]

Since the work of Selye, the core meaning of stress has expanded to include psychological factors.[33] Selye proposed the General Adaptation Syndrome, arguing that the physiological response to stress is nonspecific, implicating the endocrine system as the principal system involved in the resistance to stress. Cannon focused on the fast-acting neurotransmitters (e.g., noradrenaline) and the activation of the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system. Selye's contribution was to identify the hypothalamic/pituitary/adrenal nexus and the importance of the relatively slower acting neuroendocrine response in resisting threats to the milieu intérieur. Although there is hormonal action in response to challenges, this hormonal response is complex and often misinterpreted.[34]

The General Adaptation Syndrome addresses chronic stress, whereas Cannon focused on acute exposure to stressors. According to Selye, the body defends its homeostasis until chronic activation of defense mechanisms results in exhaustion of physiological resources, resulting in increased risk for stress-related disease such as heart disease. Stress has a role in health, but the deleterious effect is not a result of exhausted physiological resources. In the case of heart disease, stress contributes to increasing the likelihood that circulating low-density lipoproteins will adhere to injured blood vessel walls and occlude the vessel. The occlusion in turn causes further damage, perpetuating the cycle, which can result in a heart attack.

Selye's theory predominated for nearly fifty years, until McEwen challenged Selye's assumption of a fixed normal homeostatic internal state.[35] McEwen introduced the concept of allostasis, approaching the environment as a reliable force to which the organism equilibrates physiological systems to a new healthy homeostatic internal state. For example, a body's shift to the lower end of the core temperature range may not indicate succumbing to hypothermia, because at the circadian nadir, core body temperatures of underfed and

fatigued soldiers sleeping outside can routinely drop to 35º Celsius.[36] This temperature is at the limit of thermoregulatory collapse. In the referenced case, however, physiological systems equilibrated in response to environmental loads and as a result reduced overall physiological strain and thus stress. In deference to Selye, analogous to exhaustion, the underfeeding reduced brown fat resources, diminishing, at the level of the phenotype, the ability to shiver.[37] McEwen and Garruto et al. addressed the consequences of phenotypic adaptations in the concept of allostatic load.[38] The unfortunate result in this case was four soldiers in the final phase of Ranger School dying of hypothermia due to convective heat loss while immersed in Florida swamp water.[39]

Social variables are also reliable environmental forces that modulate the stress response. Recognition of that fact is important for understanding the effects of unit cohesion on well-being. In a summary of his work on aggression, Cairns concluded that contrary to widely held beliefs, the establishment of aggressive behavior does not require reinforcement or imitation, or the experience of frustration or pain. Absences of social experiences are associated with aggression from the withdrawn or isolated individual, who is more reactive to stimuli.[40] Considering Cairn's finding of dysregulation, M. Hofer researched the physiological mechanisms modulated by the social environment, particularly those involved in separation and loss. He introduced the phrase "homeostatically open system" to describe the modulation of physiological and behavioral systems through the social environment.[41] Specific physiological and behavioral systems open to regulation stem from two independent phases: an acute "protest phase" and a chronic, slow-developing "despair phase."

Changes associated with the acute phase of stress response manifest themselves immediately and include increases in agitation, heart rate, and glucocorticoid and catecholamine (e.g., norepinephrine) levels.[42] This activation of the sympathetic response describes the symptoms reported by the young Puerto Rican men. The remedy was social contact with women from their culture. Changes associated with the despair phase are decreased and variable food intake as well as decreased body weight, cardiac rate, growth hormone production, and T-cell activity. These are closely aligned with symptoms of depression.

The negative effects of loss and separation—distinct possibilities in dangerous contexts—can be reduced through a network of camaraderie within the organization. The regulation of emotion through unit cohesion has also been suggested to help the leader control the violence that units must mete out during a mission,[43] an inference corroborated by Cairns' stimulus reactivity finding.

The homeostatic theories presented above focus on the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system. The other division of that system is the parasympathetic nervous system, which is dominant during resting states. The theory of homeodynamics says that disease states may be a result of stress effects on the ability of the parasympathetic nervous system to modulate the actions of the sympathetic system stress response. Often what induces stress-related illness is not an overdriving sympathetic response but an inability of

the parasympathetic system to modulate sympathetic activation to return the autonomic nervous system to a rest-and-recovery state.[44] The message of homeodynamics and current thought to leaders: Quality sleep is essential in any stress management program.

Cognition and Memory

> *I have a couple soldiers in my company that have had issues with PTSD. One claims the psychologists/psychiatrists he's seen have no other options for him. He was first diagnosed about three years ago, so he's had enough time to try a couple of methods. He says the drugs help the depression, but nothing seems to get rid of the dreams, daydreaming, flashbacks, and such. I told him I'd try to find something a little unconventional, something he probably hasn't tried yet, but I'm really wary of trusting a "self-administered" treatment. I'm still trying to find some good articles, but I'm surprised at the low success of treatments. I am curious about one thing. Throughout the infantry, soldiers who have had PTSD problems, the few who can cope with it to the point where they consider themselves cured, claim that the one thing that helped them the most was religion. I'm almost sure that no one involved in the psychological sector would ever dare to even take a statistical analysis to validate this or even accept it as plausible, but from my viewpoint, it's really working better than anything else.*[45]

The captain who wrote this note makes several important observations. First, depression seems easily managed. Second, the captain is looking for alternatives but is cautious. Some individuals will try ill-advised remedies (e.g., alcohol) or use prescription medication without medical guidance. An active campaign must be devised to prevent these practices and offer healthy alternatives. Third, the captain inquires about religion. Chaplains and other spiritual counselors can be effective. They develop and maintain strong communities of social support and safe places where soldiers can vent without the specter of the "medical record." A soldier's specific belief or practice is not important. The existence of culturally supported and communicated systems of empowering stories and exemplars through which to ascribe, make sense of, and manage intrusive memories is important.[46]

Table 5.1 summarizes the literature on memory quality and distinguishes the qualities of trauma memories from those of autobiographical and flashbulb memories.[47] Autobiographical memories are characterized by specific, personal, long-lasting facts about oneself and one's experiences. They are recounted in context as past events, are voluntary, are subject to forgetting and restructuring, and are organized in an apparent semantically associated network.[48] Flashbulb memories are a specific type of autobiographical memory associated with amygdala activation and hippocampal involvement. These memories are vivid for discovery details around an emotional event. They have all the qualities of autobiographical memories, are recalled with strong confidence of the details, and are not problematic. An example is found in the training incident where the leader recounts, "I

TABLE 5.1
Qualities of Autobiographic, Flashbulb, and Trauma Memory

	Autobiographic	*Flashbulb*	*Trauma*
Vivid	Not a reported quality	Detailed recollection for discovery context	Vivid sensory memory
Confidence in Accuracy	Moderate	Strong	Strong
Recall	Conscious control	Conscious control	Involuntary & intrusive
Strength of Emotion Associated with Memory	Neutral	Weak	Strong
Event	Neutral	Moderately emotionally arousing	Highly emotional, usually life threatening
Facts	Factual memories subject to forgetting	Discovery facts resistant to forgetting	Sparse idiosyncratic facts resistant to forgetting
Quality of Memory	Coherent in time and place	Coherent in time and place	Mainly sensory impressions
Time	Perceived as past event	Perceived as past event	"Here and now" quality

had a map, we heard a scream, and the bump." Note that the event immediately prior to the soldier falling is remembered: "the map" followed by the sensory-ladened memories of "scream" and "bump." This is the pattern seen in trauma memories, as in phenomena such as "weapon focus."[49]

Trauma memories are qualitatively different from autobiographic and flashbulb memories and seem to be formed from stimulus events that induce an overdriving of long-term potentiation mechanisms. Figure 5.1 summarizes the formation of trauma memories as described in the temporal dynamic model.[50] Immediately coincident with an emotional load, the amygdala increases activity, activates processes in the hippocampus, and suppresses function in the prefrontal lobe (figure 5.1, panel 1). The effect on memory is an apparent enhancement, making it the sole focus of attention (e.g., weapon focus) along with cues immediately preceding the event.[51] Contextual cues immediately coincident with the event are remembered with many of the trigger stimuli having a temporal relationship with the event.

In the minutes following the event only the amygdala is active, yielding memories of the gist of events and associated emotional valance (figure 5.1, panel 2). The prefrontal cortex recovers as amygdala activity diminishes, with the recovery time dependent on the nature and intensity of the emotional load. Recovery usually occurs within several

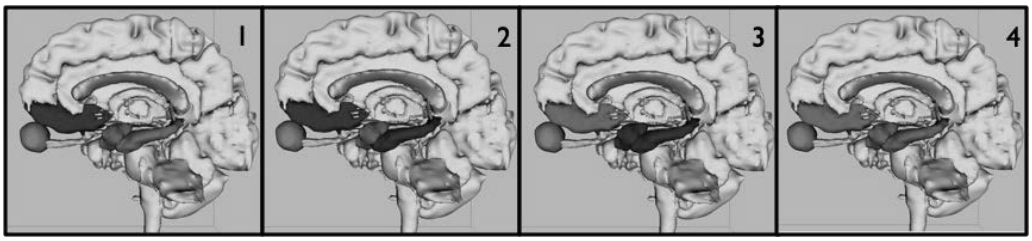

FIGURE 5.1. The Temporal Course of Brain Activity on the Prefrontal Cortex (left-most shaded structure), Amygdala (middle shaded structure), and Hippocampus (right-most shaded structure) Subsequent to a Threatening Event

minutes (figure 5.1, panel 3), but new memory formation is suppressed during the refractory period of the amygdala and hippocampus. Within hours to days, depending on the intensity of the emotional load, the hippocampus and amygdala recover function (figure 5.1, panel 4).

Given the time course of recovery, the leader should (1) give the individual at least twenty-four hours of rest for memory systems to resume normal function, (2) follow the steps outlined in table 5.3 (below), and (3) consult the organization's mental health support services. The memory is likely never to be forgotten, so the goal is to manage and master it.[52] The following example shows how a trauma memory can form and how the actions of the paramedic team, leadership, and chaplain alleviated the negative effects of the experience.

A paramedic who had responded to hundreds of calls for children in heat-induced seizure prepared himself by reviewing and practicing the proper protocol for care. When he arrived on the scene, however, the facial features of the child he was to treat struck him. The child looked to be an identical twin of his own child. Although he knew that this was not his child, he was paralyzed by the close resemblance of this child to his own. His peers noticed the hesitation and yelled at him to start performing his tasks. During the resuscitation of this child, he was visibly shaken by his inability to get past the physical resemblance. After the child was transported to the local hospital, the paramedic continued to have intrusive visual images of the child. His teammates noted his difficulties and contacted their captain. Shortly after the child was pronounced dead, a fire chaplain arrived to "take a walk" with the paramedic.[53] The immediate response and opportunity to talk about the situation allowed the paramedic to deal with the images and his difficulty in functioning, and to remain confident in his abilities in the future.

The incident shows that although stress reactions have a biological basis, the stress response involves a process of cognitive evaluations of perceived demands on one's own person.[54] These evaluations can be influenced as the individual continually reevaluates the event. Effective interventions such as the one described above are personal, voluntary, and continually offered by an experienced member of the unit. However, effectiveness is judged pragmatically in person, place, and time. Nomothetic evaluations or universally applied techniques lose the focus of efficacy of techniques for the individual and unit.[55]

Techniques are best evaluated ideographically, particularly those intended to mitigate stress. The focus of the evaluation of the technique is beneficence for the individual or unit in their time, place, and context. Applying a technique as a panacea based on nomothetic assessments can have deleterious effects and render a viable technique controversial as was the case for critical incident stress debriefing (CISD).[56] In concluding, it is worth reinforcing the importance of unit-level tailored support.

> It is true that experienced line and medical officers within the confines of their own unit, with knowledge of their personnel and of the particular situation confronting the group, can develop an operational formula specific for that time and group which is most useful. It is considered, however, that the formula for one group cannot be applied to the next, nor can it be taught to any specificity beyond the fact that it happens. Symptomatology of individuals under stress is most reactive to the patient's concept of what comprises useful symptomatology. If changes in overt behavior were specified and a matter of common knowledge, experience tends to show that the specified changes would occur with increasing frequency.[57]

Managing Stressors

Speaking to the Association of the United States Army on October 10, 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates remarked, "The standing up and mentoring of indigenous armies and police—once the province of Special Forces—is now a key mission for the military as a whole."[58] This shift comes with a reduction in force strength as the Army is advising others in their security operations and a covert enemy presence with an ever-present threat of "green" (local national partner) on "blue" (U.S. soldier) attacks as the mission requires close working relationships with the host nation security forces. The threat is real. The members of the 10th Mountain 3rd Brigade Combat Team developed an attitude for their deployment in that situation that they called "living on amber," a metaphor describing a weapons status in which the weapon is considered substantially safe with magazine locked in the weapon, the bolt forward with no round in the chamber, and the selector switch on safe.[59] Maintaining an "on amber" attitude does require discipline, particularly if there are no incidents perceived as dangerous. As the amber attitude erodes, soldiers often become complacent, and units run the risk of losing the discipline required to respond to threats and attacks.

Military deployments are typically no more than one year, and thus the amber posture is relatively brief. Law enforcement officers, however, spend their career living on amber, trying to discern if interactions with those they are sworn to protect and serve pose a threat above the substantially safe amber. In a personal communication to James Ness, a retired police officer recounted that "after a career on the force, officers come to only trust close friends and family."[60] The soldier's return to the United States from deployment affords a clear demarcation between amber and safe; the police officer is not afforded the

same geographic demarcation. The result is a demarcation of trust, with an uneasiness among acquaintances and strangers and feeling safe only among family and close friends. A similar issue with trust is seen in deployments between advisers and their local national partners.

In a personal communication with Andrea Peters, the leader of a team of advisers to the Afghan Special Mission Wing, which is equivalent to the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command, recounted an attack on the unit's position. The unit went to bed the night of July 13, 2014, as on any night. However, they awoke early on July 14, 2014, to a loud explosion of unknown origin. The still-groggy soldiers worked quickly to get their clothes and gear on so they could gather in a more secure location, clear the building, and determine what was happening. When they exited the sleeping compound, it was evident that the small base was receiving enemy fire from elevated positions of advantage. Devising a plan to call for help, the team leader and a few more teammates secured a nontactical vehicle (NTV) and made their way to the Operations Center hoping to call in fire. The team alerted higher command of the incident, and gunships were dispatched to their base. After approximately four to five hours, the Afghan unit with whom the soldiers lived on the base was able to gain their bearings and suppress the enemy fire, which was fortunate because the U.S. gunships did not have approval to fire on the enemy.

The team leader recalled that July 14 reopened their eyes to the fact that in Afghanistan they did not know who the good guys and bad guys were. This fact became the focus of unit stress and apprehension with regard to executing their mission. Each member of the team coped with the attack in a different way. The team leader decided to execute his mission as he had been prior to the attack, thinking that the best approach was to reengage and lead by example, despite his initial personal apprehensions.

This account of U.S. soldiers not trusting their Afghan partners is analogous to the demarcation of trust seen in law enforcement. In both cases, the experience of threats to one's life engendered the trust demarcation. As the team leader showed, the best way forward is morale, cohesion, and esprit. Morale is an individual-level attribute of commitment to the unit's purpose, a commitment to the unit's identity, and a sense of agency and self-confidence to achieve the unit's purpose. The team leader resolved not to let the incident derail the unit's purpose, and he led the way. He showed a pride in and a devotion to the Army's core values in his sense of duty and personal courage. Like "to Protect and to Serve," such esprit de corps is necessary for sustained effective performance in dangerous situations. Through his reengagement with the Afghan partners, trust was reaffirmed, and unit cohesion augmented.

Most stress-related symptom clusters correlated with operating in dangerous contexts are not attributable to a critical incident.[61] A complex of stimulus conditions within the context may constitute the stressor,[62] which is the accumulation of events or situations outside the realm of routine that creates a conflict in or a challenge or threat to the individual. Given the number of reported operationally related stress disorders, the greatest

eroding effect on well-being may be the cumulative effect of the operational environment itself.[63] In his communication with Andrea Peters, the Security Forces Advise and Assist Team (SFAAT) leader noted that he and the team had often discussed the commercial apartment building being built next to the base with a clear line of sight into their location. He stated that the soldiers knew there was a chance for the enemy to use the building as an elevated attack or reconnaissance position.[64] The cumulative effect of these ongoing discussions of the threat when moving between their sleeping compound and the Operations Center and the angst caused by their acceptance of the clear and present danger influenced most soldiers to decide not to reengage with their Afghan counterparts after the attack. The advisers were clearly worried about their future interactions with Afghan soldiers, resulting in diminished morale and esprit, as seen in not executing their advise-and-assist mission.

To alleviate the effects of the stressor, a leader should evaluate the context within which units are operating and manage the physical (e.g., safety, equipment, living conditions) and psychological (e.g., separation, perceived control, cohesion, morale, esprit) aspects of the environment. One area for a leader's focus should be managing the perception of the stressors by engendering attributions to help make sense of the circumstances.[65] The SFAAT leader embraced this both verbally and physically by speaking with his soldiers about how this occurrence is a part of the job of an adviser and is a calculated risk, while also recalling their multiple conversations of possible infiltration. Additionally, the SFAAT leader and his boss put guidelines in place to help the soldiers understand what they could do to protect themselves and not become complacent. Specifically, the leader reinstated the wearing of body armor and the carrying of weapons to and from sleeping complexes was reinstated. These organizational changes were good for order, discipline, and retaking back a level of control in a hostile environment. But the team leader went further. He did not want his unit to have only perceived control; he wanted the mission to be completed to standard through the reemergence of cohesion and morale that would be tied to trust and the soldiers' sense of agency. So he became a role model for his unit during this time of confusion and mistrust. After the attack, the SFAAT leader was the only person within his unit who faithfully met with his Afghan counterparts for breakfast and lunch. He found that they were embarrassed and ashamed, and they apologized profusely. The team leader gained a deeper trust and appreciation for these men, as they did for him. Ultimately his willingness to trust improved the morale of the Afghan and American soldiers alike.

Experientially Derived Leader Applications

In general, reframing the perceived stressful component helps reduce stress.[66] Reframing can be achieved through education; training; cohesion; a unit's culture of catharsis; promoting coping strategies; and instilling a sense of commitment, control, and challenge.

Educate. It is important that a leader provide accurate information so team members have appropriate expectations and are psychologically prepared. Information about the

mission, rules of engagement, length of deployment, host nation, rival factions, and environment all proffer details for calculating the risks involved. Constant communication and updates maintain psychological preparedness, thus mitigating the unknown as a stressor.

Train without interruption. Well-learned and practiced skills are less likely to be disrupted by stress than those that have not been perfected.[67] Realistic and mission-focused training builds confidence, improves cohesion, and prevents boredom. When individuals feel they are prepared, trained, and equipped for any eventuality, personal stress reactions are minimized. For example, stress reduction–specific imagery and skills-training programs decrease subjective distress and physiological stress reactions.[68] In sum, stress inoculation training using realistic situations better prepares those operating in dangerous contexts for potential stressful situations.

Maintain unit cohesion. Unit cohesion is the bonding of members of an organization in such a way as to sustain their will and commitment to each other, the organization, and the mission. The attack on July 14, 2014, eroded the cohesion between the members of the SFAAT unit and their Afghan mission wing counterparts. Cohesive, well-disciplined units are less susceptible to the influence of risk factors than those that are loosely knit and lack appropriate discipline (Table 5.2). Internally, cohesion remained high in both organizations, but jointly there were issues with moving past this incident. Cohesion encourages teamwork during tough or trying situations and assists with making sense of a crisis through grounding on comrades and leaders. The SFAAT team leader decided to go against the grain and human nature. He did not just continue to advise the Afghan soldiers; he also made space to heal broken mental and physical bonds within the joint operation by creating social events and barbeques where the men could laugh, joke, and

TABLE 5.2
Risk Factors for Stress Reactions

Soldiers or first responders are at risk for stress reactions no matter how seasoned or experienced they are. Risk factors are those conditions that increase the probability that stress exposure will turn into a serious mental health problem. Risk factors also make combat and operational stress reaction (COSR) more likely. The presence of risk factors does not automatically mean someone becomes debilitated by stress, but it raises that risk. Many of these risk factors can be modified, reduced, or eliminated. The following risk factors have been associated with a stress reaction:
• Length of exposure to operational stress
• Severity of operational stress experience
• History of previous traumatic events (war, childhood sexual abuse, assault) and/or amount individual personally relates to the event
• Previous mental health problems
• Alcohol abuse or dependence
• Lack of a support system or unit cohesion

eat. These events garnered more participation of American soldiers and began to break down the stressors that initially caused the division.

Set the culture of catharsis. Jack, a friend of coauthor James Ness, recounted a story from his time fighting in Vietnam. During a firefight he heard a friend's call to shift fire. As Jack looked over in response to his friend's voice, his friend's head separated from his body and rolled past him. Jack expressed how slowly things seemed to move at the time. Later that week the unit received a pallet of beer. Jack grabbed his weapon and a satchel of ammunition and sat on top of the pallet, drinking and threatening anyone who approached the beer. His unit let him be. A few days later, his unit started out on patrol, and he was told that he could not go unless he sobered up. The thought of not being part of the team turned Jack around, and he went on patrol. The leaders of Jack's unit built a cohesive unit and established the culture of catharsis. As a result, Jack's memory of the event, although vivid, was not intrusive or problematic. The lesson is: Know your people, know the crucible, set up a culture of catharsis, and know that leaders are a principal source of resilience.

Teach coping strategies. People develop patterned ways of coping with stress.[69] A sense of control is strongly associated with the mitigation of the progression of debilitating stress-related sequelae.[70] Step 7 of the psychological first-aid core actions listed in table 5.3 suggests providing an affected individual with the tools needed to promote coping.

TABLE 5.3
Psychological First-Aid Core Actions

1. Contact and Engage	Initiate contact with the individual in a nonintrusive, compassionate, and helpful manner.
2. Provide Safety and Comfort	Provide immediate safety and emotional comfort.
3. Stabilize (if needed)	Calm and orient emotionally overwhelmed and distraught individuals.
4. Gather Information: Current Needs and Concerns	Identify immediate needs and concerns, gather additional information and tailor Psychological First Aid interventions.
5. Provide Practical Assistance	Offer practical help to the individual in addressing immediate needs and concerns.
6. Connect with Social Supports	Establish brief or ongoing contacts with primary support persons or other sources of support including unit members, friends, and other helping resources.
7. Inform on Coping	Provide information and education about stress reactions and coping to reduce distress and promote adaptive functioning.
8. Link with Collaborative Services	Link individuals with needed services and inform them about available services that may be needed in the future.

Note: These core goals of Psychological First Aid constitute the basic objectives of providing early assistance, within days or weeks following the event. The amount of time spent on each goal will vary from person to person and with different circumstances according to need.

Numerous studies of people with experience in dangerous contexts indicate that individuals who feel that they are in control of their circumstances and their environment feel equipped to handle stress. Although exposure to life-threatening events is an obvious source of stress, administrative and bureaucratic conditions of an organization can compound the experience and impair recovery.[71] For example, as the Army attempts to determine the cause of forms of disparity, such as promotion of Black officers in senior ranks, soldiers talk of burnout attributed to the compounding of racial stress over time and the increase of work-related demands. The depth of racism or perceived racism on a soldier's psychological or physiological well-being is still not understood, though research shows a correlation.[72] Efforts must be made to destigmatize reporting, facilitate support, and eliminate administrative practices that make one feel controlled by the system.

Commitment, control, challenge. Characteristics conducive to responding well to stress are valuable assets. Kobasa studied executives under corporate stress and found that those who exhibited commitment, had a sense of control, and approached problems as challenges reported less stress than those who did not exhibit these qualities. With time, practice, and training, people can acquire these qualities.[73]

Commitment is the sense that one has a purpose and that one's contribution to the team is meaningful. Commitment to the mission and belief in its importance give members a sense that there is meaning to their lives. Leaders can facilitate commitment by integrating members into the team, giving them a real role and a sense of control through having the freedom to act within that role.

There are two types of control: internal locus and external locus. Soldiers, police officers, firefighters, and first responders understand that there are many events over which they have no control. Although a particular event cannot be controlled, however, an individual's reactions and responses to it can be. Training prepares people operating in dangerous contexts for situations they may encounter and promotes an internal locus of control. Not all situations or scenarios can be anticipated, but using information from critical incidents to anticipate events fosters an internal locus of control. In the scenario with the paramedic, he was prepared to respond to an unconscious child, but he was unprepared to be distracted by thoughts and feelings about his own child. With his internal locus of control temporarily disabled, he could not perform his duties. Restoring him to normal level of functioning required that he believe that his child was safe and that he could overcome this experience.

An external locus of control is the belief people have about how much real or actual control they have over what happens to them. Those operating in dangerous contexts perform a delicate dance between what they control and what happens to them. Again, training is imperative for anticipating what might happen. Leaders nevertheless need to be able to respond to an unplanned situation within the framework of a plan, thus reducing the level of stress and increasing the sense of external control. People in harm's way or

battling to save a life need to experience and perceive a sense of control over their destiny. One way to expand external control is to frame an unexpected event as a challenge. Such a situation framed in this manner motivates those encountering the situation to meet the challenge and leaves a memory of honestly and honorably performing one's duty in the face of adversity.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

In addition to leader strategies to mitigate stress, the organization also plays a significant role in promoting employee well-being. One of the more widely described models involves three levels of interventions that may occur before or after the stress occurs and that may involve the individual, the team, and/or the organization. The first level, or primary, intervention is designed to prevent stress through identifying potential causes and risks; the secondary level is designed to provide employees with skills that help them identify and cope with stress; and the tertiary level is designed to manage the symptoms of stress.[74] These organizational interventions include leaders and employees and may augment strategies that leaders and employees already use; additionally, these services may cross intervention levels and are not consistently defined across the literature.

While employing primary intervention methods to prevent stress is ideal, it is impossible to identify and eliminate all workplace stressors; nevertheless, several strategies may be employed that may improve well-being. Primary intervention strategies address the macro environment, which consists of organizational culture and climate, career development, as well as physical conditions; the microenvironment, which focuses on workplace systems; and employee control.[75] Providing recruits with realistic expectations of what the job entails allow potential employees to make an informed decision about whether they feel that the demands of the job are compatible with their goals.[76]

Once hired, employees may experience modifications that help to maximize their performance and well-being, thus benefiting the organization. Such modifications consider factors such as work schedules and physical workspace. This is especially important for those who work in a dangerous context. While it is recognized that control over all job conditions, especially when certain circumstances are not planned, is not possible, utilizing lessons learned should provide some assistance in preventing stress. Lessons related to shift work and sleep schedules, for example, are beneficial to a wide range of organizations and relates to workplace safety.

Additionally, well-trained managerial staff may be better able to address employee needs. Feedback through a 360-degree mechanism is a commonly employed method for collecting information about employee needs, while surveys of organizational culture and climate surveys are often used to assess employee perceptions of the workplace. Letting employees know that their feedback was considered and may result in change is also important in giving them a sense that they have opportunities to contribute to important decisions that relate to the mission and vision of the organization.

The Hardiness Institute, which offers a train-the-trainer program, is another example of a primary intervention. Someone trained in this technique can train others regarding the three facets of hardiness, which include enhancing an employee's commitment to work and life; enhancing an employee's sense of control; and opening an employee to change and challenge.[77] The institute helps individuals as well as organizations handle change by focusing on three fundamental areas of functioning: coping, self-care, and social support.

Even when primary interventions are utilized, however, workplace stress will still occur. The model used by the Hardiness Institute bridges both primary and secondary interventions. Secondary interventions include a vast array of health promotion options designed to enable employees to modify their response to stress. They range from encouraging exercise, meditation, muscle relaxation, practicing coping skills, and utilizing peer support, to improving communication and career planning.[78] Several of these are described earlier in the chapter in the managing stressors section and in table 5.3.

The Army's Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness Program (CSF), established in 2008, is a health promotion intervention based on positive psychology principles. The program is designed to build resilience in and improve the performance of soldiers, their families, and civilian employees who experience varying levels of stress. The program contains four elements. The first element includes an online assessment known as the Global Assessment Tool (GAT) that assesses emotional, social, family, and spiritual fitness. The second element consists of individualized learning modules to improve fitness in these domains based on responses to the GAT. The third element consists of periodic formal resilience training. The fourth element involves training personnel to serve as Army master resilience trainers (MRTs) to support and enable resilience in the workforce.[79] In 2012 the program was renamed Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2).

Tertiary intervention strategies focus primarily on personnel who are experiencing stress symptoms that may occur at any stage of employment. Strategies may include the use of employee assistance programs that provide help with workplace as well as personal challenges such as legal, financial, workplace conflict, drug addiction, caregiving, and mental health.[80] Psychologists play a critical role with tertiary interventions and can also assist with primary and secondary interventions. Regarding tertiary interventions, mental health treatment is the most obvious and may be needed to address the personal challenges noted above to include those that may stem from operating in a dangerous context. Psychologists may also assist during significant periods of employment such as injury or transitioning from the workplace. Employees such as firefighters or police may receive training about the psychological factors that may impact their behavior as well as being given the opportunity to engage in support services.[81]

As the above examples show, all three levels of intervention are important to preventing and/or managing employee stress and, depending on the level, involve the

employee, leaders, and/or the organization. These strategies need to be implemented at all stages of the employee's career and can be tailored to optimize the health and performance of the employee while helping to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

While the leader and organization play a vital role in helping to manage stress, stress likely extends beyond the workplace, and management should involve the individual outside of the work environment. The literature focuses more on coping with work stressors than on personal life stressors; however, there are some general strategies that address several facets of well-being and can supplement strategies provided by leaders and organizations. The American Psychological Association,[82] the National Institutes of Health,[83] and the National Institute of Mental Health offer information on practical, evidence-based solutions to addressing stress.[84] Table 5.4 provides strategies for coping with stress.

TABLE 5.4
Promoting Well-Being in the Individual

Strategy	*Description*
Eliminate the stressor	While not always possible, for those stressors that one can remove, this strategy would be the most direct route. Examples would be removing clutter or ensuring a needed repair or task is completed.
Exercise	Engage in regular physical activity for overall health benefits.
Healthy eating	Consume a diet that includes fruits and vegetables while avoiding/limiting foods that are associated with negative physical health outcomes.
Social support	Seek and provide support from friends and family, whether tangible (e.g., cooking, childcare) or intangible (e.g., advice, praise), that may improve one's capacity to manage stress.
Relaxation	Several techniques such as muscle relaxation, meditation, breathing exercises, and yoga may assist in improving mental and/or physical health.
Goal and priority setting	Plan by creating checklists and organizing activities.
Sleep	Sleep on a regular schedule in a suitable environment.
Reframe thoughts/develop a positive mindset	Using principles of cognitive behavioral therapy and/or developing a positive mindset through practices such as expressing gratitude may assist in viewing stressful situations in a different manner that reduces stress.
Seek professional help	Speak with a healthcare professional if your own strategies do not seem to be working. Help from a professional can provide the ability to reflect on experiences and behaviors that contribute to stress followed by developing a plan of action to address the stress.

CONCLUSION

Whether you lead first responders, law enforcement officers, members of the armed forces, emergency medical teams, or any other team involved in protecting, serving, and caring for people, you must remain sensitive to and effectively manage your team's emotional loads. This is essential to maintaining the health of your team and their human connection, which motivates and sustains the team's beneficence, agency, and self-esteem. To maintain the human connection, leaders must champion sleep, fitness, and good health habits. Leaders should know their people, know the crucible, and set the culture for catharsis. They should also be aware of the two forms of stress-producing experiences: the critical incident and the eroding effect of the dangerous context itself.

A culture of catharsis is particularly important. Leaders and the team members themselves are in the best position to have a positive effect on the team's well-being because they learned to know one another through the crucible of shared experiences. When Jack was allowed to have his beer and was then presented with the choice of keeping the beer or remaining a part of the team, he dropped the beer and chose the team. When the paramedic took a walk with the chaplain, it helped the paramedic put the images of the lifeless child in context and remain confident in his abilities to perform. The NCO reached out to the leader when the team thought the radio operator had been lost. The gesture affirmed that he—and the team—knew the leader had genuine care and concern for them. In all cases, the positive agent of change was the strong social knit of the unit, which the leader and the organization had established through a culture of catharsis. Through establishing and maintaining a culture of catharsis, the leader and the organization become a source of resilience.

Certainly, a technically competent professional team that performs well is most likely to succeed in its mission. Thus, a leader's stress management strategy should include educating and training without interruption. Although technical competence is critical to team function, it is not enough. The leader must maintain unit cohesion, morale, and esprit. Toward that end, the leader must promote adherence to the beneficent nature of the work, implement strategies of caring and concern, and promote a culture of catharsis to mitigate the emotional loads of the critical incident and the eroding effects of the dangerous context. These goals are not easy to achieve and maintain. The cases presented in this chapter exemplify the need for leaders to see their teams through life-threatening situations, to be the force of beneficence toward which first responders, law enforcement officers, members of the armed forces, emergency medical teams, and other organizations strive.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The strength of an organization is augmented by its spirit—its morale, cohesion, and esprit. In building organizational spirit, the leader has two powerful tools: caring and concern.

2. The negative effects of loss and separation—distinct possibilities in dangerous contexts—can be reduced through a network of camaraderie. The regulation of emotion through unit cohesion helps the leader control the violence that units sometimes must employ.
3. A soldier's specific belief or practice is not important as long as he or she knows that there are culturally supported and communicated systems of empowering stories and exemplars through which to ascribe, make sense of, and manage intrusive memories.
4. The team leader resolved not to let the incident derail the unit's purpose and led the way. His esprit de corps, sense of duty, and personal courage showed his pride in and devotion to the Army's core values. Like to Protect and to Serve, esprit de corps is necessary for sustained effective performance in dangerous situations.
5. In general, reframing the perceived stressful component helps reduce stress. Reframing can be achieved through education; training; cohesion; a unit's culture of catharsis; promoting coping strategies; and instilling a sense of commitment, control, and challenge.
6. A culture of catharsis is particularly important because the leader and the unit members themselves have the greatest positive effect on the team's well-being; they possess the best knowledge about the members of the unit and the incident as they have shared experiences.

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CHAPTER 6

The Decisive Moment
Decision Making under Stress

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IN JANUARY 2009, U.S. AIRWAYS FLIGHT 1549 PERFORMED an emergency landing in the Hudson River after hitting a flock of birds and losing thrust in all engines. The pilot's decision not to return to the airport of the flight's origin or to attempt to land at the surrounding airports, but instead to bring the aircraft down in the icy waters between New York City and New Jersey, saved all 155 people on board.

A few years earlier, on September 11, 2001, another plane had flown down the Hudson River and intentionally crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Seventeen minutes later, terrorists flew a second plane into the upper floors of the South Tower. On that fateful morning, there were two other deliberate plane crashes, one into the Pentagon and the other into a field in Pennsylvania. People around the world watched intently as firefighters and other emergency responders made critical decisions in their efforts to rescue some 20,000 people thought to have been in the twin towers that day.

Subsequently, in Afghanistan and Iraq, military commanders made life-and-death decisions on the battlefield. More recently, healthcare workers had to make critical decisions concerning the medical treatment of COVID-19 patients. The Capitol Hill riots of January 6, 2021 and active shooting incidents require law enforcement personnel to make decisions in a rapidly evolving and dangerous situation. Every day, critical decisions are made with potentially life-altering consequences.

Mass media makes people around the world eyewitnesses in near real-time to the decisive moments when leadership is on the line and critical decisions are made to adapt to the danger of extreme events. Those watching the decision makers have the luxury of time to second-guess the decisions, free of the stress and personal drama that surrounded those decisions.

Many who operate and lead in dangerous contexts have stories of decisive moments of exercising their leadership. The *in extremis* core of decision making, however, is one of the least-studied elements of the human dimension.[1] The physical realities of professionals undertaking decisions in dangerous contexts such as firefighting and military operations make this one of the most challenging environments for the application of science.

Few researchers have endured the risk or unpredictability of studying human processes in the presence of danger, preferring less meaningful post hoc strategies. Nonetheless, understanding decision making in dynamic, complex situations where people's lives are at stake provides important insights into leadership in dangerous contexts.

Part of decision making in those contexts involves choosing a method and knowing when to use it to increase the odds of succeeding. To demystify this process, we apply decision-making research here to personal experiences inside the World Trade Center on September 11, on the battlefield, and inside an airplane cockpit during an emergency landing to see what it is like to make decisions when they count the most. Examining the decisive moments for firefighters, soldiers, and airline pilots provides unique insight into how decisions are made under the stress and pressure of extreme events. Knowledge gained about decision making in dangerous environments can be applied to a broad range of businesses, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and other situations where leaders are expected to make critical decisions in a crisis.

THE ELEMENTS OF COMMAND AND DECISION MAKING

Extreme events require leaders to make critical decisions under a haze of uncertainty and to perform complex organizational tasks under tremendous stress. Often these leaders are physically fatigued, sleep-deprived, and nutritionally challenged.[2] They are asked to act decisively and yet remain flexible to a changing threat environment. The actual unpacking of decision making is a monumental task because researchers define the term in different ways—in relation to strategic thinking, psychology, neuroscience, and so on. In the nineteenth century, the military strategist Carl von Clausewitz wrote that during prebattle evaluations, legendary commanders such as Napoleon Bonaparte saw how to win a battle in a "glance." Clausewitz used the French expression coup d'oeil, which he described as "the rapid discovery of a truth that to the ordinary mind is either not visible at all or only becomes so after long examination and reflection."[3] This "glance" is the moment when commanders make sense of a situation and envision a plausible course of action. Having this capability is the first element of command.

The second element of command is having the resolve to carry through with one's strategic intuition despite surrounding uncertainty. A simple plan vigorously executed in a timely manner is almost always better than a complicated plan performed too late.[4] The third element is having the "presence of mind" to remain flexible to the unexpected, which may require analytical thinking. Clausewitz discovered that great commanders first see what needs to be done and then resolve to follow their insights while adapting to

the unexpected. These three elements of command are crucial to emergency and military operations today. Examples of the three elements can be seen in the actions of firefighters in New York City following the al-Qaeda attacks on September 11.

> *On September 11, 2001, at 8:46 a.m., while operating in the street at a gas emergency in Lower Manhattan, a group of firefighters heard the roar of a low-flying commercial airliner accelerating as it flew down the Hudson River. Suddenly, the plane appeared, then aimed and crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. No one could believe that on a perfectly clear day, a plane would crash into New York's tallest building. In an instant, we knew that we were going to the biggest fire of our lives. I remembered trying to comprehend what took place and at the same time, take command. My first order was a direct command: "Go to the World Trade Center." This was followed by a brief description on fire dispatch radio that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center and to transmit a second alarm. Based on past experience at major fires, I knew I had to give concise orders to maintain command and control. These orders were given almost automatically, within seconds of impact and without fully understanding the magnitude of the event. Without hesitation, firefighters immediately mounted their fire trucks. With flashing lights and blasting sirens, we raced to the World Trade Center. The fire and the smoke coming from the upper floors of the World Trade Center fit the pattern of a high-rise building fire. But this was no routine fire.*
>
> *The World Trade Center attack was a novel and complex event. Never before had a commercial plane deliberately crashed into a modern skyscraper. It did not match anything from our firefighting experience and was quite different from the accounts of a much smaller military B-25 plane crashing into the Empire State Building on July 28, 1945. As we responded to the World Trade Center, I remember telling myself that I had to slow my thoughts down and deliberately think of what I had to do next. There were tens of thousands of people that needed to be evacuated or rescued. I forced myself to remain calm.*
>
> *Within a minute of my first radio transmission, I gave additional orders very precisely and deliberately over the Manhattan Fire Dispatch radio: "Battalion One to Manhattan, we have a number of floors on fire. It looked like the plane was aiming for the building. Transmit a third alarm. Have the second alarm report to the North Tower and have the third alarm stage at Vesey and West Streets." In a "glance," I envisioned a course of action to manage this incident. This message began with an intuitive statement of the plane aiming for the building, denoting a terrorist attack, and an analytical order envisioning the initial resources needed and where to deploy these units. Over the next one hundred minutes after this transmission, dramatic events of rescue and building collapse unfolded rapidly, requiring critical decisions that combined intuition and analysis.*

In a crisis, leaders are expected not only to use intuitive gut feelings, but also to apply rational thinking when making critical decisions. Each mode of decision making uses different parts of the brain, with one mode outperforming the other, depending on the task that needs to be accomplished. The key to good decision making in dangerous situations is knowing when to rely on which mode of thinking and when to use both.

Battlefields are replete with examples of commanders constantly switching from one mode to another or sometimes applying a hybrid approach. For example, on April 5, 2003, less than two weeks after ground forces started moving into Iraq, U.S. military forces conducted raids through the center of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad. Three battalions, fewer than a thousand combat soldiers, launched an aggressive thrust of Abrams tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles into the heart of the city, and in three days of bloody combat ended the initial phases of the Iraq War. This surprise assault on Baghdad, spearheaded by the Spartan Brigade commander, Col. David Perkins, who led the Second Brigade of the Third Infantry Division (Mechanized), is an illustration of one leader's intuition that a single armored brigade would be able to successfully penetrate and literally capture a city defended by one of the world's largest armies.

Using a combination of intuition (I have sufficient combat strength to accomplish the mission) and analytical thinking (my logistics can support this initiative), Perkins declared on April 7, "If I can spend a night in Baghdad, then this war is over." Organized resistance by defenders of the regime of Saddam Hussein essentially ended after Perkins' bold action. Thus, a decision by a commander on the ground potentially saved lives by ending the immediate armed resistance. Some of the highest-ranking officers of the U.S. military command found out about Perkins' tactical exploitation of the enemy only after seeing media coverage of it. The operation exceeded their expectations. The critical combination of intuition and analytical thinking was paramount. The decisive moment in dangerous situations requires the ability to switch and combine the different modes of thinking.[5]

INTUITIVE THINKING VERSUS ANALYTICAL THINKING

One of the widely accepted rational models for decision making derives from the work of I. L. Janis and L. Mann, who define decision making as a process of comparing a range of options, evaluating them, reexamining their positive and negative consequences, rating them, and then determining the best option.[6] The difficulty is that rational decision making has limited application in a dangerous situation, where leaders are forced to act quickly and without comprehensive information. Rational decision making works well with simple events or even complicated ones when there is sufficient time to analyze and compare the facts; this, however, is not how firefighters, soldiers, or pilots operate when fire is raging, bullets are flying, or a plane has no power. Those confronted with such situations depend heavily upon their intuition in deciding what actions to take. Yet, analytical decision making is also called upon during emergencies to craft creative solutions for novel events. Problems might arise from a lack of guidance regarding when it is best

to use intuition and when to switch to rational analysis. To fully comprehend decision making, one should examine research on it in the psychology and neuroscience literature.

After extensive research on the decision making of firefighters and combat soldiers, psychologist Gary Klein determined that they make decisions by using cues to recognize a situation as typical or atypical and then decide on a course of action by relating it to their experience.[7] Developing a quick course of action benefits by pattern matching and envisioning how actions are carried out while also adapting to the evolving situation. This means that firefighters and soldiers do not compare all possible options, but choose the solution most likely to work based on prior experience.[8] These experiences are rooted in past events or training, or are vicariously experienced by studying after-action reviews and history. If an option is not working, it is immediately customized or abandoned and a new solution is created. This permits firefighters and soldiers to adapt quickly and avoid being paralyzed by evaluating endless possibilities. These types of decisions are further defined by A. Dijksterhuis and L. F. Nordgren as a gut feeling, and by the popular writer Malcolm Gladwell as decisions that occur in a "blink."[9] Here, intuition, which is recognizing what to do without fully being conscious of why one has this knowledge, plays a critical role in decision making.

J. Lehrer explored the inner working of the brain to explain intuition. He argues that emotions that trigger intuitive insight occur when the neural transmitter dopamine is released. Dopamine automatically detects subtle patterns based on experiences that were not consciously noticed.[10] The more experience and knowledge one has, the more likely a new incident will match a pattern from the past. Intuition, or the emotional brain, is especially useful in making immediate decisions in life-threatening situations. It is the supercomputer of the brain, rapidly scanning past experiences to find relevant information that matches the current condition.[11]

Another example of high-stakes decision making with lives on the line occurred on January 15, 2009. After taking off from New York's LaGuardia Airport, U.S. Airways Flight 1549 struck a flock of geese and the plane lost thrust in both engines. Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger radioed a mayday message stating that the aircraft had lost power and was turning back toward LaGuardia. The air traffic controller suggested runway 13. Sullenberger "knew intuitively and quickly that the Hudson River might be [the] only option, and so articulated it." He responded to the controller, "We're unable; we may end up in the Hudson."[12] Sullenberger next considered Teterboro Airport, in nearby New Jersey. After being told by the air traffic controller that he was cleared for an emergency landing on runway 1, Sullenberger said: "We can't do it." Not understanding the gravity of the situation, the air traffic controller again asked Sullenberger which runway he would like at Teterboro. Sullenberger immediately replied, "We're gonna be in the Hudson."

Desperate to come up with another option, the air traffic controller suggested Newark International Airport, which was a few miles away. But the decision was already made. Captain Sullenberger then narrowed his focus to concentrate on landing the aircraft in

the Hudson. The airplane skidded along the surface of the water and turned slightly left before it came to a stop near the *Intrepid* Air and Sea Museum. Sullenberger, realizing that the airplane was in danger of sinking, opened the cockpit door and gave a single order: "Evacuate."

During three critical minutes of flight, Captain Sullenberger did not try to compare all of his options before determining the best choice; instead he considered and then discarded one at a time those he thought might work. He later wrote that there was not enough time to calculate the plane's rate of descent. Instead, he created a "three-dimensional mental model" of the situation to determine if his choice could be executed.[13] This type of decision making fits Klein's recognition-primed decision model. As each of Sullenberger's mental simulations failed in his search for the likely option that might work, he came to realize the best option was the Hudson River.[14] Making decisions in dangerous circumstances requires the intuitive brain to size up the situation and form the initial impulse about what to do.[15] The analytical brain can then process the mental simulations to see if the option will work. Pilots refer to the skill to think during a crisis as creating a "deliberate calm," which blends intuitive pattern matching with analytical thinking. Analytical thinking occurs in the prefrontal cortex of the brain.[16] It is where calculations are computed, logical sequences processed, and rational thinking takes place. This part of the brain can also turn off impulses, which Sullenberger did when he decided not to act on his first thought—to return to LaGuardia—but decided instead to land in the Hudson River.

COMBINING INTUITION AND ANALYSIS TO MANAGE DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Intuition is good for matching patterns based on experience, but when someone encounters a novel problem that does not match their experience, the dopamine secretions fail to generate the desired neuronal connections. It is essential, Lehrer argues, to remain calm and analyze the situation to generate a flash of insight.[17]

On September 11, 2001, even the smallest decision could determine life or death. As events rapidly evolved, it was essential that emergency responders blend intuition with analytical thinking. Upon arriving at the World Trade Center, firefighters initiated rescue operations by evacuating people from the buildings and trying to rescue those trapped by the raging inferno. Firefighters carried heavy rescue equipment and self-contained breathing apparatus as they ascended the narrow stairs. Along the way, they encouraged people to keep moving down the stairs and exit the buildings. No one knew yet that the fires were weakening the structural integrity of each building, and time was running out.

> *At 9:59 a.m., we heard a loud roar and felt the building rumble. Unbeknown to us in the North Tower, this was the sound of the collapsing South Tower. In a fraction of a second, we knew something was seriously wrong and quickly moved a few meters from the lobby command post to a passageway leading up to a pedestrian walkway*

> *over six lanes of traffic on West Street. This gut feeling or intuition was generated not by knowledge of the collapsing South Tower, but by matching the loud roar to the experience of similar sounds of structural collapse. Immediately we interpreted this sound as a dangerous condition to us in the lobby and looked for shelter. This took place within an instant, without any analysis or second thought. I knew we had to move quickly from where we were standing. Seconds later, we were covered with choking dust and complete darkness, making it difficult to breathe and impossible to see the hand in front of your face.*

Without consciously understanding what was taking place, many firefighters made this intuitive decision, which saved them from being killed by flying debris. J. LeDoux suggests that intuition or gut feeling buys time while rational thought searches for a solution to a novel event.[18] In the example above, instead of spending time analyzing what was happening, the intuitive part of the firefighters' brains quickly processed information and came up with the idea to leave the lobby. Firefighters and soldiers often use this type of decision making in times of danger. Nobel Prize recipient Daniel Kahneman says that fast, or intuitive, thinking takes over in an emergency for self-protective actions, even before one becomes fully conscious of it.[19] Klein also suggests that intuition precedes analysis.[20] People with expertise know what to look for when sampling environmental stimuli. L. Shattuck, J. Merlo, and J. Graham found that more experienced military leaders (based on time in service and rank) tended to ask for less information when making decisions than did officers with less experience.[21] Their study of military leaders' decision making, which they termed "cognitive integration," suggests that experienced leaders' intuition allows them to sample a small number of sources and ignore those they deem not worth consideration. Less-experienced officers sample all sources of information available and use as much of each as allowed.[22]

> *Switching from intuitive thought to rational analysis is even more difficult under dangerous and high-stress conditions. Immediately after the loud rumbling stopped (much later, we learned the sound was from crashing steel and concrete), some of the chiefs continued to use their intuition to issue orders that "we have to get out of here." Certainly, this was a good idea and a major concern when you do not know how to get out of the building. But this was a building that I was very familiar with and I had been to hundreds of times. Even in total darkness, I had a good idea how to get out. My experience and knowledge of the World Trade Center complex allowed me a few seconds to switch my thinking from intuition to analysis. Here I focused on the next most important action to take, besides our own escape. It was clear that if we could no longer command from the lobby of the North Tower (Tower 1), we had to withdraw the firefighters from the building. I depressed the transmission button on my portable radio and gave the following firm order, "Command to all units in Tower 1, evacuate the building."*[23]

While this may have seemed an obvious decision for those watching news broadcasts on September 11, it was not that obvious for those at the World Trade Center who did not have the same information; that is, that the South Tower had collapsed. Those in command of the North Tower had to overcome cognitive biases to continue rescue operations and instead to make a decision that had never been made in the history of the New York City Fire Department: abandon a burning building with hundreds of people still trapped inside. The novelty of the 9/11 attacks did not allow the firefighters to match their experience to past patterns of commanding and following standard procedures. Instead, it forced them to become creative in their decisions. A. Howitt and H. Leonard note that emergency responders need to improvise when confronted with novel events.[24] Many of the people who were saved on September 11 owe their lives to improvisational thinking.

Lehrer points out that emotions are adept at finding patterns based on experience, but when someone encounters an event never before experienced, they need to deliberately analyze the situation to devise innovative solutions.[25] On 9/11, instead of responding to the gut feeling to get out of the North Tower, fire chiefs concentrated on what needed to be done next. The prefrontal cortex is uniquely designed to manage emotions, filter out extraneous information, and search for creative solutions to complex problems. Switching from intuitive to analytical thinking allowed emergency responders to focus on commanding, which led to the flash of insight to evacuate firefighters from the North Tower.

In immediately dangerous contexts, people act first and then try to make sense of the situation.[26] In complex contexts, however, leadership involves probing first, making sense of the situation, and then responding.[27] Leaders allow new patterns to emerge. The decision making in the North Tower of the World Trade Center is an example of this blending of intuition and cognition. Intuition gave fire chiefs the extra seconds needed to conduct more analytical reasoning to adapt to the novelty of the situation.

> *After giving the evacuation order and finding our way out, we stood under the north pedestrian bridge over West Street, connecting the World Trade Center to the World Financial Center. The street was covered with paper and the air filled with a cloud of brownish-gray dust. The Marriott hotel that was between the North and South Towers was heavily damaged and the Incident Command Post, overseeing command of rescue operations in both towers, was abandoned. The critical situation with novel sensory information made little sense. Even standing in the street, we never received word that a 110-story office building had just collapsed, nor could we see the collapsed South Tower because of the dust. I remember forcing myself to comprehend what possibly could have taken place. The more I tried to analyze the situation, the longer it took to decide on what to do next. Little did we know that the North Tower was about to collapse and crush the overpass we were standing underneath. My intuition could not match what I was seeing to any experience, and my analysis failed to make sense of the scene.*

> *Then suddenly, I felt this cold chill running down my spine that this was a bad place to stand. Immediately, I acted quickly to lead the group I was with out from under the pedestrian bridge and north to the corner of West and Vesey Streets. Key to this decision was the ability to have the presence of mind to switch between the two modes of thinking and not be paralyzed by too much analytical thinking.*

Adaptability in dangerous contexts requires the ability to move back and forth between intuitive and analytical modes of thinking for decision making.

BARRIERS TO DECISION MAKING

Dangerous conditions demand that personnel who perform in such contexts prevail over physical, cognitive, and organizational limitations to carry out their mission. In extreme danger, these limitations become barriers for leaders to overcome in their decision making.

Physical Limitations

Warriors and emergency responders operate in conditions that impose significant demands on the senses, limiting the ability to communicate through normal auditory and visual pathways. Noise (e.g., vehicle engines, power tools, gushing water, weapons fire) and murky conditions (e.g., smoke, sand) can hinder the ability to communicate critical information. Under high stress, an attentional narrowing of the senses occurs that can, for example, reduce peripheral vision.[28] This affects perception by the senses, as outlined in the above example of the environmental factors at ground zero. These physical challenges make it extremely difficult to scan, focus, make decisions, and act. Heat, cold, exhaustion, and a host of other stressors can have debilitating effects on long-term and working memory.[29]

Cognitive Limitations

Many military strategists emphasize that the strength needed to win future wars will be more cognitively than kinetically based.[30] This rings true for emergency responders as well. Early tactical decisions made in the handling of dangerous emergencies will have significant operational-level effects on the outcome. In such situations, leaders will need to overcome their cognitive biases to increase the quality of their decisions when lives are involved.

Decision makers constantly try to make sense of context. M. Endsley points out that sense making is backward-focused, finding reasons for past events, while situation awareness is typically forward-looking, projecting what is likely to happen in order to inform effective decision-making processes.[31] Decision making relies on seeing what has happened and anticipating what might happen. However, having to process a large volume of information hijacks the working memory of the brain. Kahneman says anything that occupies your working memory reduces your ability to think.[32]

So, how does an expert process information? Along with understanding context and noticing information, cues, and data in the environment, or the lack of certain cues, an expert can often tune out unnecessary information. Sometimes leaders can successfully employ cognitive shortcuts by using heuristics or rules of thumb, although these tactics and techniques cannot alone be relied upon.

Instructing leaders on the dangers and benefits of types of cognitive shortcuts or strategies that are used consciously and unconsciously will potentially make a better decision maker, or at least a more informed one, especially under extreme conditions, when physical and cognitive resources are potentially at their limits. The benefits of shortcuts for decision making are self-evident—deciding which exit of a plane one would choose in an emergency, for example, or formulating an escape route when searching a burning apartment. The pitfalls of certain heuristics and biases are well known, however, from the framing of decisions to the readiness to use what is available to the memory, or the availability heuristic.[33]

Cognitive biases are essentially mental errors caused by simplified information-processing strategies. It is important to distinguish cognitive bias from other forms of bias, such as cultural bias, organizational bias, or bias that results from self-interest. In other words, a cognitive bias is not necessarily the result of an emotional or intellectual predisposition toward a certain judgment, but rather of subconscious mental procedures for processing information.[34] One of the ways to avoid the pitfalls and shortcomings associated with cognitive heuristics and biases is to be aware of them and to use simulations to practice overcoming them. Table 6.1 lists some common decision-making and behavioral biases of which all decision makers should be aware.

Organizational Limitations

While cognitive bias may blind individuals to emerging threats, organizational factors may prevent the integration of information until it is too late.[35] As events move from routine to complex, emergency responders and members of the military tend to "segregate" functional tasks. What was once a convenient division of labor mutates into specialized fiefdoms, with little contact or communication between people performing one task and those performing another.[36] This separation creates organizational blind spots in decision making. There is a natural tendency for people with similar backgrounds to form homogeneous groups and provide more information to members of their own group and less to members outside the group. The behavior of separating and providing information only within a certain group is known as organizational bias.[37] In some businesses, such behavior is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over the competition. In dangerous contexts, however, organizational bias can limit situational awareness and create barriers for decision making and commanding.

There is evidence that as the stress and complexity of a crisis increase, people tend to narrow their focus to the aspects they judge to be most important to them and feel little

TABLE 6.1

Common Decision-Making and Behavioral Biases

Automation bias	The tendency to trust information provided via electronic information systems over intuition or human sources; accepting information derived from the use of automation as a "best guess" instead of vigilant information seeking and processing
Bandwagon effect	The tendency to do (or believe) things because other people do, with the goal of gaining in popularity or being on the winning side
Confirmation bias	The tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms one's preconceptions or course of action
Professional deformation	The tendency to look at things according to the conventions of one's profession, ignoring broader points of view
Denial	The tendency to disbelieve or discount an unpleasant fact or situation
Expectation bias	The tendency to believe or certify results or analyses that agree with one's expectations of an outcome and to disbelieve, discard, or downgrade corresponding weightings for information that appears to conflict with those expectations
Extreme aversion	The tendency to avoid extremes, being more likely to choose an option if it is the intermediate choice
Framing effect	The drawing of different conclusions based on how data are presented
Illusion of control	The tendency to believe that one can control or at least influence outcomes that one clearly cannot control
Information bias	The tendency to seek information even when it cannot affect action
Loss aversion	The disutility of giving up an object is greater than the utility associated with acquiring it
Normalcy bias	The tendency to discount novelty and to respond to such events with only routine procedures
Neglect of probability	The tendency to completely disregard probability when making a decision under uncertainty
Not invented here	The tendency to ignore a product or solution that already exists, because its source is seen as an adversary
Reactance	The urge to do the opposite of what someone wants one to do out of a need to resist a perceived attempt to constrain one's freedom of choice
Selective perception	The tendency for expectations to affect perception
Unit bias	The tendency to want to finish a given unit of a task or an item, often resulting in sequential behavior limiting simultaneous tasks
Wishful thinking	The formation of beliefs and making decisions according to what might be pleasing to imagine instead of appealing to evidence or rationality

obligation to share valuable information with those outside their group.[38] In most cases, people think that someone else in their organization will share the information. In social psychology, this concept is referred to as a diffusion of responsibility and often leads to the well-known bystander effect.

Psychologist Kelly McGonigal notes that the stress response stimulates the pituitary gland to produce the neurohormone oxytocin.[39] The oxytocin reinforces organizational bias, so individuals turn inward toward their own group for support.[40] Such organizational bias resulting from stress explains why there are often information gaps and a lack of collaboration during critical decision making.

OPTIMIZING COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE: THE PERFORMANCE TRIAD

The U.S. Army recognizes three major factors that contribute to optimal human performance.[41] Known as the Performance Triad, these are sleep, nutrition, and exercise. Firehouses have cots and exercise equipment for firefighters during 24-hour shifts. And it goes without saying some of the best meals are cooked in firehouses. While these factors may seem to be common sense, they are frequently ignored or, if recognized, difficult to optimize because of operational requirements.

Sleep

Those who lead in dangerous situations often do so under conditions of chronic sleep restriction. Shiftwork is common, and those working overnight shifts experience the disruption of normal circadian cycles of sleep. Both sleep restriction and circadian disruption can have profound effects on cognitive performance and decision making. In a comprehensive review of the sleep and circadian rhythm literature, Shattuck and colleagues summarized varied and substantial negative impacts on cognition and decision making.[42] They report that learning, memory, and attention are degraded in such situations. Ethical decision making may be impaired, as is the integration of cognition and emotional responses to situations. Sleep restriction and circadian disruption are also linked to questionable decision making. Sleep deprivation is similar to acute alcohol intoxication in its effects on cognition and psychomotor performance. Accident rates increase under these conditions. Twenty-four hours of sleep deprivation—not uncommon for frontline leaders in dangerous situations—is equivalent to a blood alcohol content of 0.08 percent, which is legally drunk in most states.[43]

Given the potentially profound ill effects of sleep and circadian disruption on decision making, leaders should take steps to maintain good personal sleep hygiene. Sleep banking (getting more sleep than normal prior to beginning sustained operations) may build a temporary sleep reserve. During ongoing and sustained operations, strategic napping may offset some of the negative impacts of sleep restriction and circadian disruption, at least for a while. Judicial use of mild (and legal) central nervous system stimulants may

also provide a useful countermeasure for a period of time. But the effective leader must know that these are stopgap measures, and that to sustain effective decision making over long periods the leader must devise a plan to optimize sleep. This may prove challenging in organizations like the military, where the cultural norm of "toughness" demands that leaders be visible and active at all times during crises.

Finally, leaders must take steps to optimize the sleep patterns of their subordinates by scheduling and protecting their sleep time. Requiring subordinates who work the night shift to attend training or other meetings during daytime hours exacerbates the effects of circadian disruption. Structuring the work situation to allow short "power naps" during overnight operations can help sustain cognitive performance and emotional resilience. In short, effective *in extremis* leaders must recognize the importance of sleep for themselves and their followers and take steps to optimize sleep and minimize the effects of circadian disruption.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition serves a neuroprotective function. Operational circumstances or poor lifestyle choices may result in poor nutrition, which can result in suboptimal cognition and decision making. Poor nutrition may contribute to decrements in mood as well as cognition.[44]

A well-rounded diet is the best strategy to optimizing neurological functioning. The military invests heavily in developing nutritious field rations. These rations, like Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), are high in calories to compensate for increased energy expenditure in operational settings and are designed to contain the balance of carbohydrates, protein, and other nutrients needed to sustain physical and cognitive performance over extended periods.

Those who have completed challenging military training courses like Ranger training or engaged in exhausting physical activities such as mountain climbing or long-duration athletic competitions have experienced the acute effects of nutritional deficits on attention, perception, memory, and decision making. The cognitive impairments that occur under these conditions may be quickly reversed with the consumption of carbohydrates.[45] Caffeine may enhance cognitive performance under some circumstances but should be used with discretion due to possible long-term health effects of overuse. Besides coffee and other caffeinated drinks, products like caffeinated chewing gum may offer a short-term boost to cognitive performance, vigilance, decision making, and mood.[46]

Other than the short-term enhancements of brain function discussed above, there are no nutritional shortcuts to sustaining optimal cognitive functioning. We advise against using commercial dietary supplements that claim to boost cognitive performance unless advised to do so by a physician. Instead, leaders in dangerous situations should make a well-rounded diet a priority in maintaining their own cognitive fitness and encourage those they lead to do the same.

Exercise

The third leg of the Performance Triad is exercise and general physical activity. Aerobic exercise and weight training are associated with the release of neurochemicals that promote brain health. This is in addition to the positive effects of exercise on general bodily functions, including heart and vascular health, reduced body mass index (BMI), and postural strength. Lack of exercise is associated with a host of pathologies, including diabetes, depression, and cognitive decline in older people.[47]

Exercise is particularly critical for *in extremis* leaders because it facilitates mental sharpness. Effective leaders also recognize the importance of physical fitness in maintaining unit cohesion and morale. Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen, USA (Ret.), had daily workout sessions with cadets, faculty, and staff while serving as the 59th Superintendent of West Point. Participants who completed ten sessions earned a "commander's coin" in recognition of their accomplishment. Caslen regularly completed the physical training tests required of cadets many decades his junior in age to serve as a role model for the importance of leaders' commitment to physical health. Simply stated, a fit *in extremis* leader will be better able to manage his or her own physiological reactions (managing deliberate calm) and still have the capacity to attend to the task at hand.

Because of individual differences in age, health, and physical condition, we suggest that leaders consult their physician and specialists in exercise science to design a physical training program that fits their unique needs and will be one they can stick with. While strength and aerobic training will benefit all, the specifics of that training will likely differ for a sixty-year-old police chief, an eighteen-year-old soldier, and a forty-year-old firefighter. To sustain your physical training program, keep a record of your daily exercise and seek social support from others. Running or completing a weight training session with friends is often more enjoyable, and therefore more sustainable, than going it alone.

NOVELTY AND COMPLEXITY POINT TO INTERDEPENDENCE

Fire chiefs, military commanders, and airline pilots dominate the examples cited here, but most professionals who regularly operate in dangerous contexts have the authority and often the experience to deal with critical situations—until, perhaps, they are faced with novel and complex events. Such events are characterized as having interagency dependencies for collaborative intelligence that require decisive leadership to overcome cognitive and organizational biases. A failure to address biases will result in a lack of situational awareness and poor decision making, which places leaders and managers at a disadvantage in handling crises. Incident management during complex and novel events does not rest with a single person. Leaders should increase the rate of information exchange and foster collaboration to generate new tactics and ideas. The key issue for decision makers is often not the ability to acquire more knowledge but the ability to harness the wisdom of others.

On May 1, 2010, New York's emergency responders overcame cognitive and organizational biases when they were called to a possible vehicle fire in Times Square. When

firefighters arrived, they noticed that something "did not seem right." The owner of the SUV was nowhere to be found, and there was white smoke coming from the car rather than black smoke. A handheld thermal camera showed no sign of fire, and an odor of fireworks emanated from the rear of the vehicle. Firefighters exchanged this information with police and asked them to run the license plates. The plates did not match the car. The fire lieutenant had to quickly process all these pieces of information.

The lieutenant could easily have fallen victim to a number of cognitive biases and treated the incident as a routine car fire. Instead, he concluded that they might have a car bomb on their hands. He avoided organizational bias by collaborating with police throughout the process, which led to a decision to evacuate the area. Combining intuition with analysis and overcoming biases to recognize interdependencies of information were critical for safety. It was later determined that the SUV had the potential to be a lethal bomb.

IMPROVING DECISION MAKING

Efforts to find technological answers to address the physical dangers, cognitive puzzles, and organizational challenges that push leaders to their limits continue. The New York City Fire Department has developed an Electronic Command Board (ECB) system to assist chiefs in decision making at fires and emergencies. ECBs are tablets connected to a network that display such information as unit deployment, emergency distress signals, and digital blueprints of floors and other building information. Larger ECB displays are used for major fires, but all sizes graphically present essential information for decision making.

As an incident increases in complexity, incident commanders are forced to remember dozens of unit names and locations within a building while still managing the fire (or fires). Trying to manage too much information can overload the brain's working memory and take up valuable cognitive space, adding to the stress of command and limiting the ability to concentrate on critical aspects of incident management. The ECB frees the brain from memorizing facts by displaying them in easy-to-grasp pictures, allowing chiefs to concentrate on managing the incident, which requires the brain to blend intuitive and analytical decisions. ECBs are part of a wireless decision-support system that can share information with other first responders at the scene and emergency operation centers elsewhere, thus creating a common operational picture and collaborative decision-making environment.

In the final analysis, however, it is humans, not technology, who make the important decisions in extreme crises. Exercising leadership in dangerous contexts is not only about individual decisions; it also involves getting others to adapt to a new threat environment. In extreme events such as terrorist attacks, military conflicts, and aviation emergencies, decision making is an interdependent activity requiring collaborative intelligence. The challenge is to design a response system able to support and adjust readily to the urgent demands of events.

Sophisticated networks now provide decision makers with access to critical information from both within and outside their agencies. Such interconnection and interaction make the whole greater than the sum of its parts.[48] The Goldwater Nicholas Act of 1986 and the 9/11 Commission Report (2004) recognized this fact by requiring and reiterating that military and emergency responders must operate together in a unified system to be as effective as possible.

Initiatives are under way to develop means to allow military and emergency responders to accumulate life experiences through virtual simulations. These simulations will focus on identifying, developing, improving, and assessing intuitive and analytical decision-making skills in challenging scenarios. Such simulators will allow leaders to learn and train through scenarios that replicate life experiences repetitiously and with low overhead and little risk.

Human factors—physical, cognitive, and social—are vital elements determining success in dangerous situations, and new technology is being engineered to leverage human capabilities and enhance performance. For example, a well-designed interface that elicits personal interaction could lead to a self-referent memory approach by a trainee, potentially improving accurate recall when a similar situation arises.[49] This type of interaction with a simulator supports the theory of recognition-primed decision making.[50] If properly exploited through interfaces, it could promote perceptual learning in the areas of intentional weighting, stimulus imprinting, differentiation, and utilization.[51] These facets of cognitive psychology and learning are addressed in flight simulators, while military and law enforcement organizations try to do the same with firearm and gunnery simulators, and fire departments with high-rise building fire and flashover simulators.

While a positive transfer of training is expected from virtual experience, a host of other benefits can be realized with a well-made decision trainer. One can build crisis decision-making proficiencies using dynamic scenarios for use on tabletops as well as by devising full-scale exercises that promote intuitive and analytical decision making under stress, teaching leaders to blend reason with emotions.

To prepare for violent extremists, law enforcement and fire department medical personnel participate in intense full-scale active-shooter exercises with simunition (nonlethal ammunition) and fake blood. The aim is to place first responders under stress for experiential learning so they can draw on this experience in real situations.

Instructional methods for developing expertise must couple new technologies with seasoned experts, allowing simulations to compress experience into efficient repetition. The simulations should challenge trainees to adapt to novelty as well as to act reflexively based on a strong grounding from past experiences. Because time will not stop and junior leaders require skills immediately upon entering high-risk occupations, it is necessary to accelerate the development of expertise by forming a cognitive apprenticeship with leaders recognized as being successful.

Effective instructional methods provide mental schemas, allowing the organization of learning so leaders can match solutions to past or ongoing problems and create innovative courses of action for tomorrow's new problems. This type of research should aim to improve long-term memory for ready recall in dealing with future extreme situations. Training needs to support guided discovery using the experience of veteran leaders and includes learning from errors through naturalistic feedback. Leaders must be given time to reflect individually as well as collaboratively with peers and coaches on how to use the two modes of decision making to adapt to threat environments or crises.

LEADERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

Extreme events require leaders to place people in dangerous situations to contain and mitigate the hazard. Using their understanding of decision making and behavioral biases, and with the help of simulations and repetitive training, successful leaders employ a blend of intuition and analytical decision making. Although technology continues to influence decision makers at all levels, it is the skillful integration of humans and technology that changes tactics, techniques, and procedures to improve performance and save lives.

In stressful situations, leaders overcome ever-changing physical, cognitive, and organizational environments to make critical decisions by producing a deliberate calm. The professionals who make leadership decisions under such extreme conditions exhibit remarkable fortitude and resilience; they have chosen a lifestyle that embraces challenges. They not only aim to survive harsh environments, they thrive in them. Effective decision making under stress requires a balance between cognitive intuition and analysis. The stirring stories of 9/11, military battles in Iraq, and the emergency landing in the Hudson River illustrate the need to be armed with the knowledge of human cognitive capabilities and the understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the modes of decision making. Decision making in a crisis becomes more difficult with increased complexity and the need for rapid solutions. It is not only firefighters, servicemembers, and pilots who face decisive moments in their careers; other first responders as well as business executives will also find themselves making critical leadership decisions. Collaborative decision making to supplement the individual decision-making skills discussed in this chapter will be the next inescapable leadership challenge.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Decision making in high-stress tactical situations relies on a combination of analytical and intuitive thinking. Analytical decision making is learned through building a comprehensive understanding of tactics, techniques, and procedures. Intuitive decision making forms through a combination of systematic training, exercises, and experience. Successful *in extremis* leaders learn to switch between intuitive and analytical thinking.

2. Leaders must be aware of physical, cognitive, and organizational limitations and biases in decision making within themselves, their followers, and their organizations, and must develop strategies and conditions to overcome them.
3. Realistic virtual simulations provide the opportunity for building experience for decision making. These simulations supplement but do not replace field training.
4. Effective *in extremis* leaders understand that optimizing sleep, nutrition, and exercise is vital to sustaining cognitive and physical efficiency for extended periods.

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CHAPTER 7

Real-Time Resilience and Leadership in Challenging Situations

HUBERT ANNEN, DONNA BRAZIL, AND BOB DELANEY

WHEN YOU STOOD IN LINE AT AN AIRPORT CHECK-IN COUNTER in January 2020, you probably looked with some suspicion at people wearing face masks. You had already heard about the new type of coronavirus, of course, but still, there seemed to be no need to act so fearfully. The fact that just a few months later wearing a face mask in public spaces was considered completely normal is just one sign of the drastic effect the pandemic had on all areas of our personal lives. But our community as a whole—the political and economic system, the rule of law, the healthcare system—was also clearly suffering the effects of the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic took a toll on all of us. Social isolation, the double burden of childcare and working from home, fears of job loss or infection, not to mention the unclear prospect of when it would ever stop put a strain on mental health. It is therefore not surprising that "corona fatigue" began to be observed in the population, manifested in circumvention of restrictive rules. "Closed" restaurants welcomed guests in the back room, people met in parks, and individuals took long sips of their coffee on the train so they did not have to wear the mask. In a less inoffensive way, this discontent expressed itself in protest marches and even riots all across the globe, including in the Netherlands after a 9 p.m. curfew was imposed. Events like the latter shed light on groups of persons who not only had to deal with the crisis on an individual level but were also called upon to fulfill their mission in these difficult and often dangerous situations: police officers, firefighters, soldiers, medics, and paramedics.

Police officers were already navigating various challenges before the coronavirus pandemic due to the stressful nature of their jobs. Organizational stressors such as shift changes and lack of departmental support coupled with the witnessing of multiple traumatic events are risk factors that have already been documented to result in adverse outcomes, including high rates of suicide, post-traumatic stress, and work-family conflict.[1]

The coronavirus pandemic increased these risk factors as police officers received additional responsibilities. Over and above responding to crimes, they were required to enforce closures of nonessential businesses, disperse social gatherings, and maintain order at testing sites and local hospitals, all while trying to preserve their own health.[2] Staff shortages occurred as more officers called out sick or tested positive for the virus.[3]

The corona virus is almost certainly not the last crisis that our first responders will have to navigate. As we settle into the "new normal," leaders have the opportunity to learn from this last crisis and better prepare themselves for the next one. One of the lessons learned is that during crucial times such as national emergencies, when frontline workers are stressed personally as well as professionally, they need well-developed coping mechanisms and increased emotional support.[4] Like every other citizen, they will be exposed to pandemic-related stressors, but at the same time they will be called on to uphold and enforce the relevant safety measures required of the citizens on behalf of the state.

We expect a great deal of these officers. We expect them to show an adequate reaction, we expect them to remain calm, we expect them to show force appropriately, and we expect them to deal successfully with challenging situations and carry on in the face of adversity. In other words, we expect them to be *resilient*.

Resilience is required of all of us in the current era. But what distinguishes first responders from others is the demand for immediate yet thoughtful action in the face of danger or adversity; one could call it *real-time resilience*. In times of crisis, this need for real-time resilience applies to most organizational leaders as well. It has always been clear that the true character of leaders and organizations is revealed in their reactions during critical situations.[5]

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is commonly understood as the *ability to deal successfully with challenging situations and to carry on and persevere in the face of adversity*.[6] This refers to the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt effectively to disturbances that threaten its viability, function, or development. Taking that definition further, resilience can be viewed as the ability to think through such threats and work together with others who are trying to prepare populations to deal with disasters.[7] Resilience cannot be the magic wand that provides a solution to every challenge or menace, but people and organizations that possess resilience are better prepared to deal with adversity than those that do not.

From "Fix What's Wrong" to "Build What's Strong"

At one time, the field of mental health was dominated by a pathogenic perspective—how diseases develop, appear, and can be cured. Basic questions addressed risk factors, vulnerabilities, and therapies. However, theories and models about the emergence and treatment of diseases did not consider the fact that most people facing the same or similar circumstances remained healthy. Since the 1960s this pathogenic perspective has been

balanced by the complementary notion of salutogenesis: the focus on the origins of health rather than illness.[8] Beginning with the work of Werner in the early 1970s the concept of resilience appeared more frequently in the relevant psychological literature.[9] Antonovsky's insights were mainly influenced by Holocaust survivors who were able to leave behind their traumatic experiences and live a normal and healthy life. Werner investigated children who grew up in great poverty and heavily burdened social environments and found that at least one-third of those children overcame these unfavorable conditions. Werner described them as resilient.

Subsequent research helped refine the notion of resilience as (a) the ability to "bounce back," (b) the ability to continue forward and maintain equilibrium in the face of chronic adversity, (c) the ability to live with ongoing fear and uncertainty, and (d) the ability to adapt to difficult and challenging life experiences. It turns out that resilience is more the rule than the exception, and more common than rare; it is, to use Masten's metaphor, "ordinary magic."[10] But what are the essential components of this ordinary magic?

The Determining Factors of Resilience

Although we acknowledge that resilience occurs on different levels ranging from the individual to the community to whole populations or nations, and can also be related to various thematic areas, such as environment or economy,[11] the focus here remains on psychological resilience at the individual level. Even with this narrowed focus, the literature contains numerous factors related to resilience, making a summary of the field difficult. Within the framework of a RAND study, Meredith et al. conducted a systematic review of the scientific literature on psychological resilience and identified twenty evidence-informed factors associated with resilience.[12] Of those, seven were assigned to individual-level factors: positive coping, positive affect, positive thinking, realism, behavioral control, physical fitness, and altruism. A more recent meta-analytic study described the psychosocial factors believed to be amenable to resilience development, including self-efficacy, optimism, social resources, and cognitive appraisal/coping.[13] From a practice-oriented perspective, the American Psychological Association named four factors related to resilience: the capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out; a positive view of one's self and confidence in one's strengths and abilities; skills in communication and problem solving; and the capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses.[14] The essence of these three investigations can be summarized in the following "four Cs" of resilience:

- ***Cognitive ability***: one needs a certain degree of intelligence or information-processing capacity to detect the heart of a problem and the relevant steps toward the solution.
- ***Confidence***: one needs optimism to overcome problems or setbacks, as well as trust in one's skills and abilities (self-esteem, self-efficacy).

- ***Control***: challenging situations cause intense emotions, which must be (re-) appraised and regulated; the person needs the ability to regulate their emotions and focus on what they can control.
- ***Communication***: overcoming a challenging situation often calls for social support; accordingly, the person involved needs social resources and the communication and social skills to activate them.[15]

One could argue that this is nothing new; similar aspects and skills have long been mentioned in stress management and even leadership courses. Indeed, there is an obvious connection to well-known stress models such as the transactional stress theory and to concepts such as hardiness.[16] However, specifically with regard to first-responder organizations, whose members usually desire to appear strong and invincible, the concept of resilience explicitly implies that one can be thrown off track by an event yet bounce back. The resilient person is not the rock in the surf who bears the brunt of the wave's force alone. Rather, resilient people accept that a setback, a defeat, a period of depression, or the like can happen, and that they need to activate their energy and individual and social resources to overcome the stressful situation. Considering these factors that distinguish resilient individuals from less resilient ones, the question arises as to what extent this is a predisposition and to what extent these factors can also be learned and trained.

THE ROAD TO RESILIENCE

First, understand that resilience is not a simple or static construct. An individual may be resilient in one domain of his or her life (e.g., work life) but not in another (e.g., family life), during one phase of life (e.g., middle age) but not during a different phase (e.g., adolescence), and in response to one type of trauma but not another.[17] Second, research suggests that there are both inherent traits and modifiable constructs involved in determining individual resilience; and various personal examples show that people are able to personally grow during or in the aftermath of challenging, stressful, or even traumatic experiences, a phenomenon known as post-traumatic growth (PTG).[18] Due to their genetic predisposition, their education, or their previous experiences, individuals will have a different starting position when they face challenges or threats, but the respective disposition is not cast in stone; it can be developed, and the development process can be sped up and reinforced by specific training methods.

Resilience-Building Programs

Organizations are increasingly seeking to adopt resilience-building programs to prevent absenteeism, burnout, counterproductive work behavior, and other stress-related issues. To date, the overall effect of such programs is rather small,[19] but even small effects when applied to large numbers of individuals may result in significant economic and societal

benefits. This is the approach followed by the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF2) program of the U.S. Army,[20] which to our knowledge is the largest project in this vein.

CSF2 consists of three components. The first is the Global Assessment Tool (GAT), a specifically developed psychometrically valid assessment tool that, when administered online, is a time-efficient way of measuring an individual's fitness in the four dimensions of psychological fitness (emotional, social, family, spiritual).[21] The GAT provides servicemembers with individualized feedback that can guide self-paced training, which is the second main element of the program. Depending on their relative psychological strengths identified on the GAT assessment, soldiers receive a selection of appropriate self-development opportunities. The third pillar is the training of master resilience trainers (MRTs), who in turn deliver resilience training within their units. This training focuses on ways that servicemembers can bolster core resilience competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, optimism, mental agility, strength of character, and connection.[22]

MRTs are trained in a two-week course. The material and its delivery are based on well-established methods from positive psychology, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and sports psychology. The MRT program is one of the flagships of resilience training in terms of duration and method of implementation. Evaluations of this resource-intense initiative have been positive. Among other things, units with MRTs at the company level had 60 percent fewer diagnoses of drug and alcohol abuse compared with units without MRTs; and units with MRTs had 13 percent fewer diagnoses of anxiety, depression, and PTSD.[23] Other resilience-building programs have also improved participants' scores on performance and well-being outcomes and reduced scores on outcomes reflecting psychosocial deficits upon post-training assessment.[24] Resilience is also context-specific, however; there is no universal approach to resilience interventions. The methods and the setting must consider the specific environmental context and the people involved. The scientific evidence for this and the practical implications of these factors are the focus of the following section.

Bus Lanes and Worksites on the Road to Resilience

Resilience interventions should always be considered in tandem with practical applications. For example, in a population overwhelmed by ongoing trauma and hardships, introducing methods with a complex process for learning and use may be difficult.[25] This applies to military and emergency personnel, who are often under great pressure to act and are more likely to experience trauma and hardship, but also to leaders who usually do not have the time and serenity to deal with such things in depth.

Especially at the start of resilience training, it is advisable to use a simple tool that can be implemented quickly. The "What Went Well (or Three Blessings)" exercise has already proven itself in this regard.[26] Participants are instructed to set aside ten minutes every night before they go to sleep to write down three things that went well that day, a

short sentence about why it went well, and what it meant to them. Doing this may seem awkward at first, but those who stick with it for a few weeks are likely to detect a change in their mindset. They will perceive more positive things in everyday life; they will be less depressed, more optimistic, happier, and—ideally—addicted to this exercise. A modified form was implemented with officer cadets in the Swiss army, who were thought to be unlikely to take ten minutes each evening to keep a "three blessings" diary. Instead, at the beginning of their resilience training they received a cord and were instructed to make a knot in it every time something positive happened.[27] In each training lesson, the cords were used to share positive experiences; the cord was a tangible reminder that could be brought out in difficult situations, and looking at the knots helped to create a favorable mood for resilience training.

Just like mental training for athletes, resilience training focuses on *methods to control thoughts and emotions*. We can all understand the example of an ice hockey player who gets upset when he is fouled and his opponent is not penalized. If he resorts to "vigilante justice" and takes direct revenge on the offender—and therefore, rightly, receives a match penalty—he only causes more damage to himself and to his team. Or let us imagine a police officer who is called to a traffic accident. When he arrives, he is mobbed by a group of drunken onlookers and has to watch as they prevent the ambulance staff from doing their job. It is understandable that his emotions at this moment are at odds with what he knows is his duty as a law enforcement officer. Or as a third example, when we asked a young officer cadet what kind of critical situations he expected to encounter in his practical service as platoon leader, where he would be responsible for thirty moderately motivated conscripts of more or less the same age, his response came quickly: "I am afraid of the moment when I make a mistake and my recruits take notice of it." When asked what he would do in such a moment, he answered: "I [would] make the recruits do fifty push-ups so they don't forget who their boss is." It is doubtful that this response will secure the long-term allegiance of his soldiers.

These examples show that people in critical situations run the risk of causing unnecessary damage because of the way they interpret the situation and their resulting—quite understandable—thoughts and emotions. Participants in resilience training learn to analyze their thoughts, their behavior, and their individual contribution in stressful situations. The tools taught in such training programs are usually based on the *ABC model*.[28]

First, the *activating event* (A) has to be detected: sticking straight to the facts, what actually occurred? Second, what raw, unfiltered thoughts or *beliefs* (B) did the individual have concerning the event? Finally, what *consequences* (C)—that is, what emotions and reactions—resulted from these thoughts or beliefs?

Military personnel, police officers, and leaders of organizations often find it difficult to identify activating events because they must accept and admit that there are situations in which they feel they did not cope adequately or react appropriately. This mental barrier shows up in such contexts quite often when it comes to psychological support.

For example, soldiers may avoid seeking psychological help even when their problem has been clearly diagnosed.[29] They think that they will be seen as weak, that the unit leadership might treat them differently, that their comrades might have less confidence in them, that the leaders would blame them for the problem, or that it would harm their career. Although the therapy of traumatized soldiers after a deployment is in no way comparable to a training sequence program before a deployment, soldiers view them as very similar. Accordingly, it is worthwhile to employ peers and nonmedical personnel as resilience trainers in order to create good conditions for training participants to bring personal examples that are relevant to them. Specific, meaningful, and relatable examples are the most effective when learning the next steps. When analyzing their *heat-of-the moment thoughts* in the context of the activating event, training participants are asked to recall and isolate the specific thoughts and beliefs that were activated at the very moment of the event. In doing so they may become aware of typical *thinking traps*. Going back to our examples, the ice hockey player might think that he always gets fouled, or that the referee has something against him; the police officer might jump to the conclusion that the onlookers' behavior is triggered by their hatred of state authorities; and the young lieutenant might blame the recruits for having observed him making a mistake. The beliefs that are identified could also be influenced by *icebergs*, that is, core values and ideas about how something should be. For the hockey player, it could be the conviction that no one should be in his face; the police officer sees the situation as confirming his belief that people cannot be trusted; and the young lieutenant might believe that he needs to always appear strong to be the boss. Learning about thinking traps and icebergs helps participants to analyze and understand the thoughts behind their behavior in critical situations. This is a critical step that is often overlooked by individuals who are required to act quickly. They will usually claim that they did not have time to think and just reacted. Taking the time to retrospectively analyze the thoughts and beliefs experienced in the moment helps the person to understand the resulting emotional and behavioral consequences, thereby creating the conditions for better handling of these situations in the future.

Accordingly, the final step of the ABC model is for the person to determine whether the consequences—that is, their emotions and reactions—helped or harmed the situation. If the latter is the case, the goal is to think of how they could have steered their thoughts in a more constructive direction. So, if the ice hockey player concludes that the best revenge on his offender would have been to score a goal, he will focus his energy on his own skills and on behavior that helps his own team. The police officer reasons that the conduct of the mob was not directed against the police at all, but that these people were drunk and simply wanted action, so he proceeds to perform his duty calmly and dutifully. And the young lieutenant realizes that he cannot always be strong and flawless and that his recruits will respect him even if he makes a mistake now and then. He addresses this situation with them and asks them for suggestions on how he can do better next time.

Once they have learned these skills by thinking of past activating events, resilience training participants are encouraged to practice these steps on everyday, mundane activating events such as traffic jams, late email responses, changing requirements at work, or the dog barking during a Zoom meeting. When they make it a habit to question their thoughts and emotions and reflect on whether they are helping or harming in a critical situation, a great deal has been achieved. And the impact of this is all the greater when this is practiced by leaders.

It goes without saying that there are many more methods to train resilience; these include goal-setting procedures, energy management, deliberate breathing techniques, mental games to increase concentration, identifying and promoting character strengths (see chapter 2), and specific communication skills such as assertive communication and active constructive responding. The ABC exercises described in detail above illustrate the core principles of resilience-building programs, however, and also point out where obstacles might lurk. A number of external framework conditions might impact the success or failure of such training as well.

Regarding the method of program delivery, most programs used group-based classroom formats, but one-on-one delivery formats appear to have had the strongest effect.[30] The latter are unlikely to be used often in practice, however, because of the resources they require. The approach as implemented in MRT, in which trained peers lead groups of three or four participants, is a good middle way, and has also proven itself in the Army Resilience Training in the Swiss army officers' school.[31] Furthermore, evaluation of CSF2 revealed that the training is more effective when commanders ensure that it is properly scheduled and select confident junior leaders to serve as trainers, and when the trainers feel that their commanders support them.[32] A buy-in on all levels is indispensable. In the particular case of CSF2, the U.S. Army Chief of Staff wanted to start this program and ensured his support by publicly writing and speaking out about its importance.[33]

Resilience-building programs are effective, but only within a culture that promotes resilience. Above all, the leaders must commit to investing time and resources in such programs, as the Chief of Staff did, because leaders will have a significant influence on the attitude of the entire organization toward resilience building. So, when we talk about resilience and leadership, it is important to emphasize the importance of top-down support. But that brings up a question regarding the leaders' own resilience: Do leaders have a different type of resilience than the one described above, and if so, which elements play a crucial role in it?

LEADERS' RESILIENCE

Actually, we could keep the answer to that question short and simple. Leaders are only as resilient in their work as they are personally. Everything that has been written above with regard to individual resilience also applies to leaders—namely the definition of resilience, its determining factors, and the opportunities and methods for enhancing it.

After all, it is no coincidence that cognitive skills are often evaluated in the selection of leaders.[34] Leaders must be able to quickly identify the core of an issue or problem and derive steps to its solution as well as possible alternatives. In doing so, confidence should outshine doubt—confidence that requires self-esteem and trust in one's own abilities and skills. Furthermore, we expect leaders to remain calm and focused, especially in critical situations. To do that, they need the ability to control and regulate their emotions. And finally, these qualities will be of little use to leaders if they cannot communicate their thoughts adequately. In brief, the elements of individual resilience enable leaders to "bounce back" and ensure that they do not become a stressor for their subordinates.

But this alone is not sufficient. Leadership actions in general, but specifically in high-stress organizations, are characterized by *responsibility*, *visibility*, and *immediacy*; when these three factors come into effect, the Rubicon from individual resilience to leadership (real-time) resilience is crossed, and the orientation is no longer primarily "bounce back" but rather "*bounce forward*."[35] The characteristic dimensions (4Cs) of resilience illustrate this point.

Cognitive Ability

There is more than enough empirical evidence that general mental ability (otherwise known as general intelligence or general cognitive ability) is the single best predictor of job performance.[36] Given the cognitive demands required of leaders in terms of pattern recognition, abstraction, information retention, causal reasoning, and the like, this finding applies to them in particular. Thus, we should focus our attention on how and with which mindset resilient leaders should use their cognitive skills.

Resilient leaders are able to put the right amount of brainpower into a problem. Organizations such as the military, for instance, tend to overestimate needs when planning and the corresponding regulations. They often foster a primarily zero-defect culture and therefore create plans to prepare for the inevitable, preempt the undesirable, and control the controllable. As rational as this may sound, routine can't handle novel events, and human fallibility is like gravity, weather, and terrain—just another foreseeable hazard.[37] Accordingly, a resilient system, either an individual or an organization, plans for the unexpected by enhancing response capabilities.[38] In particular, this requires leaders to accept that surprises will happen, things will go wrong, and they do not control all variables. Accepting that, they will concentrate on developing a more general resilience to cope with adversity and change swiftly. This understanding of resilience does not ignore foresight and anticipation but is mindful of its limitations, and leaders must be aware of and accept these limitations.[39] So, when they deal with problems they must always keep some of their cognitive energy in reserve; if a plan does not materialize as it was intended to, they will still have the cognitive resources to grasp and process changes and new problems.

This means that leaders' cognitive skills must include cognitive flexibility—today more than ever. Flexibility in taking on multiple roles, balancing conflicting demands,

and acquiring new skills can be summarized under the term "ambidexterity,"[40] the behavioral orientation toward combining exploration and exploitation-related activities within a certain time period. Accordingly, exploitation aims at optimizing the performance of a certain task and is associated with high-level engagement, selection, refinement, choice, production, and efficiency; exploration entails disengaging from the current task to enable experimentation, flexibility, discovery, and innovation.[41] More simply put: when leading an operation, leaders must know the fundamentals, regulations, directives, and staff processes and take advantage of them to structure and prioritize problems and give timely orders. At the same time, they must be willing and able to recognize changes and deviations and develop new approaches accordingly. While they are operating within a plan, they need to be flexible and able to innovate along the way.

The COVID-19 pandemic, where the (perceived) threat, the countermeasures, the framework conditions, and rules and regulations seemed to change daily, provided countless challenges for leaders to hone and prove such skills. Commanders of recruit schools in the Swiss armed forces were in exactly that situation. On the one hand, there were clear guidelines as to how many recruits they had to train, what training objectives they had to achieve, and what resources they needed to have at their disposal; but on the other hand, the COVID-19-related guidelines changed almost daily, and leaders had to switch to distant learning within a short time, set up quarantine stations, move to other accommodations, and fill in personnel gaps caused by infections. In addition, they had to enforce unpleasant measures such as leave suspensions and deal with negative comments from recruits' relatives and the media. This was a heavy cognitive load to process, but as resilient leaders they had to act with an adequate mindset. "In our situation we cannot win," a recruit school commander said; "in our situation we can only act." And that leads straight into the next section.

Confidence

Resilient leaders have a healthy level of self-efficacy. That is, they are aware of their skills and abilities and trust that they can activate them, especially in critical situations. And they are expected to radiate this self-efficacy and inspire it in others. Charismatic leaders come to mind who were able to give hope to the population in times of crisis with their appearance and confidence alone. Resilient leaders do more: they inspire and provide hope through their confidence, self-control, and realistic optimism.

Sir Ernest Shackleton's Imperial Trans-Atlantic expedition is an example. Although the expedition took place more than one hundred years ago, Shackleton's behavior as a leader still resonates today. The expedition was an attempt to make the first land crossing of Antarctica. But only forty-five days after the team departed from South Georgia Island in the southern Atlantic Ocean, the ice closed around their ship, *Endurance*, and Shackleton and his twenty-eight crew members were trapped. They spent almost a year stuck in the ice, with Shackleton managing to keep people cohesive and in good spirits.

But on day 327 of the expedition the *Endurance* was crushed by moving ice and sank. The party spent the next months in makeshift camps as the ice continued its northward drift, then used the salvaged lifeboats to reach inhospitable Elephant Island. Shackleton and five others then made an eight-hundred-mile journey in an open boat to reach South Georgia. From there, he was eventually able to mount a rescue of the men waiting on Elephant Island. On day 634 he brought them home without a single life lost. This achievement was largely due to Shackleton's "You've damn well got to be optimistic" attitude,[42] his ability to look at odds that seemed impossible and believe that winning was still possible.

Confidence is also expressed by persevering in the pursuit of a goal even when facing obstacles and setbacks. Individuals may persevere almost invisibly, but leaders go about it openly. They set an example of how not to be diverted from the goal. For those who have a difficult time identifying with Shackleton's boundless optimism and his staunch belief that things would somehow work out in the end, we should note that he certainly had his doubts, which he confided to his diary. He also shared his concerns with those closest to him, as when he realized that *Endurance* would soon break apart. But the moment that happened, he was able to direct his crew with the right words to the new goal: "So now we'll go home."[43]

Such confidence has its downside. Charismatic leaders have the potential to seduce their subordinates into evil as well as good; history unfortunately records many examples of this. We assume here that leaders are committed to the right cause. Furthermore, it is important to recognize the limits of perseverance. Leaders in crisis situations have been known to work around the clock until they finally collapsed. Resilient leaders take care of their own energy management, though, and if necessary have someone at their side who can force them to take a break. They are self-aware of their energy levels and have developed healthy methods of resting and rejuvenating, and are mindful of their physical, cognitive, and emotional resources. In having those qualities they create the conditions for regulating and controlling their resources and set the example for their followers.

Control

Above we described proven methods and exercises—such as the ABC model—for analyzing one's own thoughts in critical situations to determine if the resulting emotions and reactions are helping or harming, and the need to regulate emotions as required. It should be noted that in stressful situations, people tend to fall back into old patterns of heat-of-the-moment thoughts. Leaders who want to react appropriately in critical situations have to anticipate such situations and train for them mentally—just as top athletes do.

A story told to us by a company commander in the Dutch army provides a good example. Anticipating his deployment to Afghanistan, he prepared for how he might react if a soldier from his company were to be injured or killed. He was aware that such an event

would be an emotional challenge for him and his soldiers. A few weeks into the deployment his company was involved in a battle, and he heard over the radio that one of his soldiers had been fatally shot. He managed to evacuate the fallen soldier and withdraw his troops. When they were back in the camp, he could see and even smell the sadness and anger of his soldiers and their desire for revenge. He sensed that all he had to do was give a small signal, and his people would have gone out and blindly and aimlessly taken revenge. Instead, upset as he was, he gathered his people and remembered the fallen soldier with a moment of silence, which helped lower the emotions a bit. Then he asked the troops, "What is our mission here?" Every soldier knew the mission was to support peace and represent the good services of the Dutch army. His next question was: "And how can we fulfill this mission?" In response, they decided together that beginning the next day they would intensify their contact with the locals. When they went into the villages and told the local people about the loss of their comrade, they experienced compassion in return; all in all, a better basis was created for fulfilling their mission. So, besides illustrating the importance of leaders anticipating situations in which they would be prone to counterproductive reactions and mentally training appropriate behaviors, this example also shows the paramount importance of communication.

Communication

On March 14, 2020, the Union Berlin football club was set to play FC Bayern Munich, the biggest and most successful club in Germany and one of the most successful in Europe. But on this day, football in Germany stood completely still. Given the unpredictability of the spreading pandemic, it was not known when the championship game could take place, if at all. Instead of watching enthusiastic fans surge into the sold-out venue, the president of Union Berlin, Dirk Zingler, addressed his players, saying, "No one says health is less important than money." He spoke about his concern for the club's 250 employees, who would suffer economically if the season could not be completed. He made it clear that the club would first take care of those who needed it most. He appealed to the well-paid players to be in solidarity with the cashier at the box office and the salespeople in the fan store. In the weeks that followed, he managed to negotiate a substantial salary reduction with the players that was acceptable to all concerned. In all his efforts he endeavored to create as much clarity and certainty as possible. He repeatedly succeeded in setting the club's direction with statements such as, "The way we deal with the crisis now will be reflected in the results on the pitch later on."[44]

Being able to give meaning to a crisis is often considered an essential component of resilience (see chapter 9 for an in-depth discussion of meaning making). Events that threaten individuals' sense of life as meaningful typically initiate cognitive and emotional processing efforts to rebuild their meaning systems; this processing is termed "meaning making."[45] Some people draw on their personal religious beliefs; others draw on their personal connection to a higher calling. Many police, military, firefighters, and other

first responders find meaning in their mission. In the case of leaders, however, that is not enough; they must also be able to *produce meaning*; that is, they attempt to influence the sense making and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality.[46] In order to do so, they apply appropriate communication skills, they reduce complexity when necessary, and they show the way with clear statements, memorable stories, quotes, pictures, or symbols.

The legendary Sir Ernest Shackleton provides another impressive example in this regard. He was not an alarmist about things he could do nothing about, but he was a genius at drawing on drama when he needed to mobilize the expedition to overcome extraordinary obstacles. When *Endurance* was crushed by the ice and a sledge march to the ocean became unavoidable, he had to make the crew understand that anything that would not contribute to the success of the expedition had to be left behind. After issuing the order that each man could carry only two pounds of personal gear, Shackleton set the example with a theatrical gesture. He reached inside his parka, took out a handful of gold sovereigns, and threw them to the ground. Then he did the same with his gold cigarette case. In these actions Shackleton personally demonstrated that only items that had value in terms of survival were important. He provided a focus for the expedition that was unmistakable and unambiguous: We must jettison anything that will not directly enable us to accomplish our goal.[47]

And finally, a third example will bring us back to the present time, namely to a sequence of the Master Resilience Training of the U.S. Army. Sergeant Parker stood out with his critical comments, which he often announced loudly and enriched with pointed remarks. Because of his vast experience from various deployments he was an opinion leader for his peers, and the civilian psychologists among the instructors feared that he would obstruct the course. But the contrary occurred. On the third day, when presenting his group's work on the aspects of connection, the relevance of strong relationships, and the willingness to ask for help, Parker concluded his remarks, "It goes without saying that I work on my mental strength and also search for help when I have a problem there. I owe that to my comrades!" In that moment it became clear to all that with this attitude and such statements Sergeant Parker would make a big and positive impact in his unit as an MRT.

To sum up, leaders orient their teams in challenging, critical, or dangerous situations with the 4Cs of resilience: the *cognitive ability* to detect the core elements of a problem and flexibility to adapt to new and changing circumstances; the *confidence* in having the resources to overcome the difficulties; the skills to *control* their thoughts and emotions in order to focus their energy on the solution; and the ability to *communicate* with others to build and sustain social support.

If we look at the entire picture from an organizational perspective, we need to consider a fifth C, *culture* (see chapter 16 for an in-depth discussion of culture). Resilience—and

therefore also leaders' resilience—can flourish only in an environment supportive of it. All resilience-building measures must be endorsed by top management and reinforced at all levels of the organization. This kind of support provides the basis for organizations to optimize resilience among their employees by adopting policies and procedures that take into account the aspects necessary for this: accept that setbacks can happen and that focus should be directed on how one deals with the respective challenges and what one learns from that, and by explicitly implementing programs to educate and train personnel on mental health and resilience. With resilience-training programs in particular the training tools in question should be integrated into standard personnel development measures, thus preventing the stigma that still too often attaches to psychological interventions.

CONCLUSION

In spring 2012 the Swiss Military Academy held a conference on resilience. The organizers feared that the invited guests from the armed forces, politics, and business worlds would not attend the event due to an unfamiliarity with this term. Such concerns are no longer justified today. Thanks to related research efforts and practical applications, resilience is a tangible construct whose elements can be identified, measured, and trained. Of course, it is crucial to continue the scientific debate on the relevant aspects, but the methods to assess and train resilience are well established.

In organizations where demonstrating strength and toughness is expected, such as the armed forces and police, mental health care still holds a lingering stigma. The U.S. Army's approach of framing resilience training primarily as skills training rather than as psychological intervention is thus heading in a promising direction. Furthermore, by reaching all soldiers with a self-assessment survey (GAT), as well as with a train-the-trainer model, the impact is cumulative, even if the effects of individual training are not likely to be very large. The resources for such wide-ranging programs are scarce, which is why the corresponding investment in leaders is obvious.

In all efforts to promote resilience, leaders play a pivotal role. First, with their positive attitude toward the respective measures, methods, or intervention, they influence the seriousness and motivation with which the associated goals are pursued. It is therefore worth making every effort to achieve a commitment to resilience among leaders. Second, leaders' individual resilience is decisive to the extent that they can become a stress factor for their subordinates. In this respect, they can exert either a negative or a positive multiplier effect. Companies are therefore well advised to view resilience as an important factor when selecting and developing their leaders. Third, while the factors of individual resilience apply to leaders, they must be able to use the relevant skills not only for their personal "bounce back" but also in the sense of a "bounce forward" for the benefit of their subordinates or the population.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. In crises, dangerous situations, and national emergencies, first responders face a double challenge. They are exposed to crisis-related stressors just as every citizen is, but at the same time they are called on to uphold the relevant measures required of the citizens on behalf of the state and, if necessary, enforce them.
2. Resilience is required of everyone in challenging situations and crises. What distinguishes first responders from others is the demand for immediate yet thoughtful action in the face of danger or adversity. In times of crisis, this "real-time resilience" applies to most organizational leaders.
3. Resilience is commonly understood as the ability to deal successfully with challenging situations and to carry on and persevere in the face of adversity.
4. Considering the relevant literature on the components of resilience, the following four Cs can be identified: cognitive ability, confidence, control, communication.
5. Resilience—that is, its determining components—can be trained. Numerous well-established tools are available for this purpose. The respective training is most successful when these tools become part of everyday decisions and behavior.
6. Leaders are only as resilient in their work as they are personally. The elements of individual resilience enable leaders to "bounce back" and ensure that they do not become stressors for their subordinates.
7. Leadership actions in general, but in high-stress organizations especially, are characterized by responsibility, visibility, and immediacy. When these three factors come into effect, the Rubicon from individual resilience to leadership (real-time) resilience is crossed, and the orientation is no longer "bounce back" but rather "bounce forward."
8. When "bouncing forward," the four Cs of resilience receive a different emphasis. Leaders are then able to provide orientation and guidance when they have the *cognitive ability* to detect the core elements of a problem and the flexibility to adapt to new and changing circumstances; the *confidence* that they have the resources to overcome the difficulties and are able to radiate this; the skills to *control* their thoughts and emotions to focus their energy and that of their subordinates on the solution; and the gift to *communicate* the required actions in a timely, trustworthy, and charismatic manner.
9. Running resilience-building training programs is not enough; it is also necessary to create a *culture*—the fifth C—that promotes resilience. There can be no systematic fostering of resilience without top-down support.

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CHAPTER 8

Leading to Promote Resilience and Mitigate PTSD

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Long past sunset, darkness lay upon the forward operating base (FOB) in eastern Afghanistan. We had just finished a mission when I received the call from the battalion operations officer, "There is an emergency mission requirement. Can your platoon support it? The battalion commander delegates decision authority to you since you are the leader on the ground." I quickly assessed the situation, deciding if our platoon could execute an all-night mission and journey across one of the bloodiest routes known for enemy-emplaced improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and ambushes. Our sleep deprivation increased the likelihood of our drivers, gunners, and truck commanders potentially making fatal mistakes. I also weighed the fact that there was another unit out there that really needed our help. So, I strapped on my helmet and adjusted my pistol in its holster, a nonverbal sign to everyone watching me that it was time to go. Everyone gathered at the lead vehicle for an updated mission brief, and I stood on the stairstep of the mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) vehicle looking over the platoon of approximately forty-five soldiers who entrusted their lives to me and my decision making. My adrenaline kicked in and I could feel the change in energy before I opened my mouth to speak. The soldiers were already motivated. This is who we were and what we were trained to do. After the brief, the soldiers walked—with a renewed sense of purpose—back to our trucks. Then I gave a one-handed wave before I slammed the heavily armored door. Together, we answered the call and the Cobra Platoon drove into the night.

Capt. Jacqueline M. Thompson,
U.S. Army

IF YOU ARE READING THIS CHAPTER, then the probability is high that you will be in a situation similar to Captain Thompson's in the future (or already have been) based on your chosen profession. The probability is high that you will tell subordinates that you need them to perform a critical task that they may appraise as a potentially traumatic event (PTE) and a threat to their physical or psychological health. Specific to leading in dangerous situations, PTEs primarily consist of single or repeated experiences that may ultimately lead to death or serious injury for subordinates, their unit members, or to a third party (i.e., perpetrator, innocent bystander, or enemy). We begin by discussing two of the critical factors that determine how PTEs impact the resulting psychological health of subordinates.

The first factor is how subordinates cognitively appraise the PTE (challenge versus threat); the second factor is their level of coping flexibility or ability to apply situation-appropriate coping styles after the PTE. A subordinate who appraises the PTE as a threat and then demonstrates coping inflexibility is more likely to experience post-traumatic stress disorder. PTSD is a severe mental disorder that consists of persistent physiological, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms (related to facing a PTE) and causes significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other functional areas.[1] In contrast, a subordinate who appraises the PTE as a challenge and is able to flexibly cope after the PTE will probably experience resilience (they may experience temporary reactions to the PTE, but these reactions then return to baseline levels).[2]

One of the variables that helps determine how subordinates appraise PTEs and cope afterward is the strength of their "psychological body armor." We discuss how leaders can facilitate resilience and strengthen their subordinates' psychological body armor through implementing appropriate leadership behaviors and facilitating social support when preparing for PTEs, responding to PTEs, and after PTEs. Leaders, in every action they take, play an important role in promoting resilience and mitigating PTSD in their subordinates. Therefore, the primary purpose of this chapter is to help leaders understand how they can implement certain leadership behaviors to help minimize the number of subordinates on a PTSD trajectory and maximize those on a resilience trajectory. Related to the opening vignette, it appears that the leadership behaviors of Captain Thompson before and during the PTE enabled her platoon to view the new mission as a challenge. The work to keep her team on a resilience trajectory began after the PTE and continued throughout their post-PTE life.

PREVALENCE AND SYMPTOMS OF PTSD

PTSD is a mental disorder that can occur after exposure to traumatic and/or life-threatening events. Although PTSD is known as a "signature wound" of military personnel, the disorder can materialize in any individual exposed to trauma. PTSD is associated with a wide range of negative health consequences—such as poor physical health, reduced quality of life, early mortality, including suicide, and other mental health comorbidities.[3] Given

the negative impact of PTSD, it is important to identify its prevalence among professions that operate in dangerous situations. In the United States, PTSD affects approximately 8 percent of the general public, while the prevalence of PTSD in active-duty servicemembers is twice as high.[4] Twenty-two percent of firefighters who worked in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were later diagnosed with PTSD.[5] In Canada, police officers have an average PTSD prevalence of 14.87 percent, more than twice the prevalence for the Canadian general public.[6]

A plausible explanation for this difference in prevalence rates is that dangerous-situation professionals face more PTEs than civilians, and that there can be a positive relationship between the number of PTEs and resulting PTSD symptoms.[7] For example, cadets who graduated from the police academies in New York and California faced an average of seven PTEs during their first year of service.[8] This is compared to only 67 percent of European men who faced at least one PTE during their entire lifetime.[9] Many studies have demonstrated a significant relationship between exposure to PTEs and PTSD (e.g., frequency, intensity, type, and duration of exposure).[10]

A growing number of women serve in dangerous-situation professions, making them also more susceptible to PTSD. Some research shows that women who serve in dangerous situations may be at a higher risk for PTSD than their men counterparts. For instance, women veterans have a significantly higher prevalence of past-year PTSD (11.4 percent) than men veterans (5.19 percent) and civilian women (5.96 percent) equivalents.[11] The higher rates of PTSD in women could be due to a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors.[12] Some researchers argue that the varying exposure to different types of trauma is a result of gender differences as well. For instance, PTEs that disproportionately affect women, such as sexual and physical assault, are associated with higher risks of PTSD when compared to natural disasters and motor vehicle accidents.[13] Furthermore, research shows that women veterans take on more family and home-life responsibilities than men do, and as a result may experience greater stress. This stress may be exacerbated when women receive less general and deployment-related support from team members and leaders.[14] This is a topic that deserves greater attention from researchers, and also from leaders, especially as the U.S. Department of Defense in 2015 removed all gender restrictions, enabling women servicemembers to serve in all direct combat military positions.[15]

Regardless of their gender, however, dangerous-situation professionals face higher rates of PTSD than civilians. Therefore, it is important for leaders to be able to identify the symptoms of PTSD. It is natural for subordinates to temporarily experience these symptoms, but leaders should become concerned when subordinates experience them for more than thirty days after the PTE.[16] Once thirty days have passed, the leader should then approach the subordinate privately with these concerns and decide collaboratively on how to proceed with receiving psychological assistance from military health systems.

Physiological Symptoms

Chapter 5 introduced the term "allostasis" to describe the adaptive nature of our bodies to return to homeostasis, or a stable state. As individuals face PTEs, they experience an inevitable imbalance of hormones. If this imbalance continues for an extended period, then physiological symptoms can result. There are two interrelated reasons why individuals may be unable to bring their bodies back to homeostasis. First is fear-conditioning, which occurs when the amygdala (which meditates the body's emotions) interprets neutral stimuli as threatening because the hippocampus (which plays a critical role in long-term memory) contains a memory of the neutral stimuli being paired with a threatening event. These threat-laden memories influence the amygdala's interpretation of these once-neutral stimuli in the future as if they were the threatening PTEs themselves (e.g., trash on the road previously paired with an IED).[17] Fear-conditioning can be adaptive while dangerous-situation professionals perform their duties but very maladaptive when they are trying to live their everyday lives. The second reason has to do with the prefrontal cortex, which executes higher cognitive functions and regulates the body's responses. If it is unable to properly regulate an exaggerated response of the amygdala, then physical symptoms can result.[18] Taken together, subordinates with extensive fear-conditioning and a diminished prefrontal cortex may experience an increased number of physiological symptoms (table 8.1).

TABLE 8.1

Summary of the Symptoms of PTSD Based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*

Physiological	*Cognitive*	*Emotional*	*Behavioral*
—Difficulty breathing	—Trouble concentrating and/or remembering details of PTE	—Easily agitated or outbursts of anger (with little or no provocation)	—Avoidance of external reminders of PTE (people, places, or events)
—Profuse sweating	—Negative beliefs about themselves or distorted blame	—Inability to experience positive emotions	—Avoidance of distressing memories, feelings, or thoughts
—Rapid heart rate	—Recurrent, involuntary, intrusive memories about PTE	—Persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame)	—Hypervigilance
—Elevated blood pressure	—Recurrent, distressing nightmares and/or dissociative reactions (flashbacks)		—Being detached and estranged from others
—Headaches			—Reckless or self-destructive behavior (e.g., alcohol and drug use)
—Exaggerated startle response			—Change in activities or loss of interest in hobbies
—Sleep disturbances (falling asleep, staying asleep, restless sleep)			

Cognitive and Emotional Symptoms

Professionals experiencing physiological symptoms, especially when they are not sleeping at night, are likely to become easily agitated or may have trouble concentrating at work. They may also be struggling with strong emotions related to the PTE, such as prolonged distress or anger outbursts. When individuals cognitively appraise PTEs as threats, primary emotions such as fear and rage may be present. But when they are not able to make meaning of the PTE or experience a conflict between the consequences of the PTE and their existing belief systems, then secondary emotions such as guilt and shame may result. Individuals might then try to resolve this conflict by irrationally blaming themselves—"It's all my fault" or "I'm worthless." While individuals may be able to distract themselves from normal and everyday emotional experiences, these secondary emotions are associated with much stronger emotions that cannot be easily avoided.[19] Images of the original PTE may emerge as flashbacks during the day or at night in the form of nightmares, thus resulting in the experience of strong cognitive and emotional symptoms (table 8.1).

Behavioral Symptoms

The symptoms of PTSD can become so intense and overwhelming that individuals may believe that the only way to function in everyday life is to work against these symptoms or completely avoid things that could trigger them. This helps explain why sleep can be so difficult, because it means giving up control and inevitably reexperiencing the PTE during dreams. So, PTSD sufferers may believe they have only a few options: don't sleep at all, sleep and face their nightmares, or consume enough alcohol or drugs to shut down their brain so they won't dream—and potentially relive their trauma. As a result, leaders may see the behavioral symptoms listed in table 8.1.

UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF PTSD

PTSD is more prevalent among professionals who operate in dangerous situations, but it is not the only trajectory of psychological health. In fact, most individuals will experience a resilience trajectory. To differentiate the two trajectories, let's first define the two critical factors that can impact them: cognitive appraisal and coping flexibility.

Cognitive Appraisal

Cognitive appraisal is an individual's "in the moment" or immediate assessment of PTEs as they are occurring. This initial cognitive appraisal of the PTE is an important predictor of the later onset of PTSD.[20] Researchers who worked with U.S. Army soldiers deployed to Iraq found that war zone threat appraisal was strongly associated with post-deployment PTSD.[21]

Although it did not involve dangerous contexts, a longitudinal study examining cognitive appraisals in British military veterans competing in the 2016 Invictus

Games demonstrated the adaptive advantage of a "challenge appraisal" versus a "threat appraisal."[22] Appraisals and physiological measurements gathered before and throughout the games showed that a challenge appraisal was positively related to well-being, while threat appraisals were related to diminished mental health and poorer athletic performance. Additionally, this study found that appraisals of control (controllable by self, by others, or uncontrollable by anyone) can influence a challenge versus threat appraisal.

That study is consistent with research that found that individuals consider events to be a challenge or a threat based on a sequential appraisal of relevant demands and resources. In an initial demand appraisal, individuals assess the effort required of them to complete the task, the level of danger to themselves or others to complete the task, and the potential consequences of them completing or not completing the task. Next, individuals assess their resources (e.g., knowledge, skills, abilities, and the amount of external support available) to meet the demands of the situation. Based on this sequential appraisal, individuals possess a challenge appraisal when evaluated resources meet or exceed demands, whereas threat occurs when demands exceed resources.[23]

Another variable at play regarding threat versus challenge appraisal is the personal meaning that individuals take from the PTE. Resick found that if PTEs are consistent with individuals' deeply held belief systems, the individuals will quickly assimilate the consequences of the PTE into their existing system of beliefs. In contrast, a PTE that shatters existing belief systems will cause an individual to see the PTE as a threat and increase that person's probability of experiencing a PTSD trajectory.[24] As an example, if a leader gives direct orders he or she was taught to give, and these orders result in the death of many servicemembers, the leader may question and, consequently, shatter his or her prior beliefs and knowledge. This "shattering," also described as moral injury, can lead to further maladaptive appraisals such as internal-focused self-blame ("I'm a bad person") or external appraisals ("the world is not safe").

Potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) are not uncommon in dangerous situations, where difficult, high-stakes decisions must be made and executed quickly. Results from the National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study (NHRVS) revealed that 25 percent of U.S. combat veterans reported exposure to at least one type of potentially morally injurious event: transgression by self (10 percent) and transgression by others (25 percent). PMIE exposure can lead to increased development of PTSD and suicidal ideation.[25] Common symptoms of moral injury are guilt and shame, anger, loss of trust, and isolation from others.[26] Moral injury can be particularly acute for individuals navigating different social systems, such as post-deployment servicemembers, who may reevaluate their war zone actions after returning home.[27] Leaders can reduce the effects of moral injury in subordinates by maintaining social support, listening without judgment, disclosing their own moral struggles, and facilitating engagement in values-consistent behaviors.[28]

Coping Flexibility

An individual's perceived ability to integrate certain coping styles after PTEs plays a crucial role in determining the resulting trajectories of psychological health. There are many coping styles, and no single method is universally adaptive. Coping styles are not inherently good or bad, because their adaptive qualities depend on the contexts of specific situations.[29] Therefore, it is the ability to navigate between different coping styles that determines resilient outcomes. Researchers have termed this concept "coping flexibility." Alternately, coping inflexibility is characterized by continued application of an ineffective coping strategy. Think of a subordinate who continues to cope with a PTE through avoidance, even though this coping style has not relieved the symptoms of PTSD. Kato introduced the dual-process theory of cognitive flexibility, which emphasizes the importance of two stages: (1) abandonment of maladaptive coping, and (2) re-coping with a more adaptive style.[30] Re-coping is an active process that involves three stages: selecting optimal strategies for the given situation, implementing the strategy, and monitoring its effectiveness.[31] As an individual monitors the effectiveness of the selected coping strategy, he or she determines whether the cycle of abandonment and re-coping should be repeated.

Coping flexibility is also determined by an individual's *perceived* ability to shift coping styles. Bonanno and colleagues identified individuals who are able to perceive themselves as flexible enough to engage in two different styles of coping based on the demands of the situation.[32] *Forward focus* coping emphasizes such means as maintaining goals and plans, attending to others, thinking optimistically, being able to laugh, reducing painful emotions, and remaining calm and serious. The second style of coping, *emotional processing*, consists of such means as fully experiencing the emotions related to the traumatic event and reflecting upon the meaning of the event. Emotional processing is more demanding and time-consuming than forward focus coping because the individual may need to temporarily suspend normal obligations to reflect upon and work through the traumatic experience.

Researchers have also examined psychological flexibility, which mediates coping flexibility. Psychological flexibility is the extent to which an individual can adapt to changing situations and respond with behaviors appropriate to the context and consistent with personal values. Psychological flexibility has been shown to be an important predictor of resilience among post-9/11 U.S. military veterans.[33] Looking at resilience as a multifactor set of positive adaptations, the research team found that psychological flexibility was the most significant predictive factor for reduced PTSD symptoms, even among veterans with traumatic brain injury. Psychological inflexibility was a predictor of high PTSD symptom severity. Connecting these concepts, we see how individuals' ability to appraise their situation combined with the ability to navigate different coping styles can lead to a resilience trajectory.

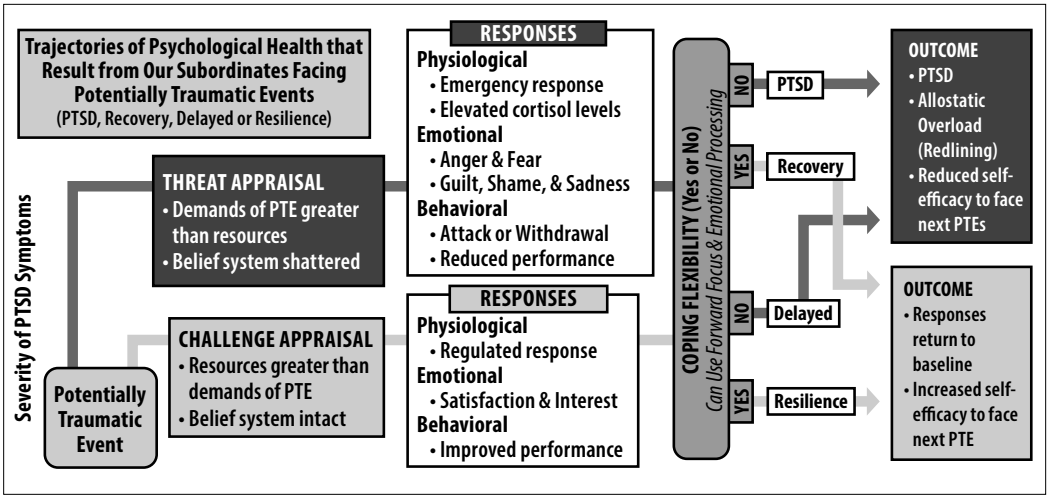

FIGURE 8.1. Trajectories of Psychological Health that Result from Subordinates Facing Potentially Traumatic Events

Trajectories Resulting from Cognitive Appraisal and Coping Flexibility

There are four distinct trajectories of psychological health (PTSD, recovery, delayed, and resilience) that may result after individuals face a PTE.[34] We propose that the interaction of cognitive appraisal and coping flexibility, the two factors introduced above, contributes to subordinates experiencing one of these trajectories (see figure 8.1). Specifically, a cognitive appraisal of threat combined with coping inflexibility greatly contributes to the PTSD trajectory and detracts from optimal performance (e.g., inability to focus and concentrate on the task at hand). The recovery trajectory occurs when an individual experiences symptoms of PTSD for a period that may last several months after the PTE or as long as one or two years. The individual initially appraises an event as a threat but then later exhibits coping flexibility to ameliorate the situation. The delayed PTSD trajectory occurs when individuals experience minimal symptoms immediately after the PTE and these symptoms significantly worsen over time; individuals appraise a PTE as a challenge and then apply coping inflexibility as they attempt to cope with the minimal symptoms they experience.

Lastly, the resilience trajectory describes individuals who may experience temporary symptoms of PTSD (e.g., several weeks of temporary preoccupation with the PTE or disturbance of sleep) but then are able to maintain relatively stable and healthy levels of psychological health. These individuals see PTEs as challenges and then employ coping flexibility after the PTE, which improves their performance during PTEs and gives them improved self-efficacy (an individual's feelings of self-confidence in the ability to execute intended actions) to face the next PTE.[35] As is discussed in chapter 7, resilience is the ability to "bounce back" from adversity or a setback. Resilience is not a personality trait but rather a dynamic pattern of positive adaptations in response to challenges. Resilience

is the most common outcome; the NHRVS found that 67.7 percent of trauma-exposed veterans are psychologically resilient.[36]

Vicarious Trauma

PTSD can also affect those who have not experienced a PTE firsthand, as in the DSM diagnosis discussed earlier. Those who witness the effects of trauma, such as medical professionals and rescue workers, can suffer vicarious trauma, which is also called secondary trauma because it affects those who have secondhand exposure to a PTE. Vicarious trauma accounts for a 10 percent PTSD prevalence among rescue workers worldwide.[37] PTSD is highest among ambulance personnel, indicating that high pressure, stress, and close contact with victims increases the impact of secondary trauma.[38] Vicarious trauma has the potential to affect family members, team members, and support staff.

It should be noted that vicarious trauma is not the only trajectory for individuals with secondary exposure to PTEs. These individuals may experience vicarious resilience, which is characterized by a positive transformative effect in response to another person's resilience. This has been studied in psychotherapists working with torture survivors who developed vicarious resilience as a result of empathetic engagement with their patients.[39] This phenomenon indicates the value of social support not just as a means of increasing resilience in trauma-exposed individuals, but also in the network of individuals who support them.

LEADERS' ACTIONS TO PROMOTE RESILIENCE AND MITIGATE PTSD

The protective value of leadership has been studied since at least World War II. Among other findings, researchers determined that units with good morale and leadership had fewer combat stress casualties than those without good morale and leadership.[40] Likewise, only 20 percent of soldiers who were experiencing elevated levels of combat exposure during a deployment to Iraq and rated their leaders as "good" screened positive for a mental disorder compared to 40 percent who rated their leaders as "poor."[41] In a separate and prospective study, U.S. Marines who rated their leaders as highly effective before a deployment to Afghanistan were about 50 percent less likely to develop a mental disorder after the deployment than Marines who rated their leaders as ineffective.[42]

Campbell and colleagues describe the leadership component as a process of social influence that involves subordinates voluntarily accepting the influence of their leader and then willingly executing tasks that they otherwise might not have been inclined to do. Leaders influence their subordinates not only through their observable personal characteristics (who they are) but through their behaviors (what they do).[43] This explains the unit's response to Captain Thompson's verbal and nonverbal actions. Effective leaders influence subordinates primarily through two different types of behaviors: task oriented and relational oriented.[44]

Leaders' *task-oriented behaviors* focus on accomplishing the mission and consist of behaviors such as defining tasks and work roles, ensuring that subordinates meet clearly established standards of task performance, and coordinating the efforts of subordinates in their unit. *Relational-oriented behaviors* focus more on establishing supportive environments based on strong interpersonal relationships, such as showing concern and respect for subordinates, treating subordinates as equals, and focusing on the welfare of subordinates.[45] The execution of leadership is complex, because dangerous-situation leaders must be able to shift between task-oriented and relational-oriented leadership behaviors depending on changes to environmental demands and/or the timing and three phases of the mission.[46] The three phases are (1) preparation for PTE, (2) during the PTE, and (3) after the PTE. Leaders who implement the appropriate leadership behaviors in each phase can strengthen the psychological armor of their subordinates, increase the number of subordinates who experience a resilience trajectory, and optimize the performance of their organization.

Preparation for PTE

A challenge appraisal results when individuals assess that their own resources (internal and external) will enable them to meet the demands of the PTE. Leaders help to increase this later assessment of resources by preparing individuals during the preparation for PTE phase (see figure 8.2). In this phase, leaders can improve subordinates' preparation

LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST

BEFORE PTE	DURING PTE	AFTER PTE
Task-Oriented (50%) ☐ Communicate clear standards, values, and expectations ☐ Provide rigorous/realistic physical and profession-specific training that replicates situations to be faced during PTEs ☐ Provide psychological skill-based training **Relational-Oriented (50%)** ☐ Know your subordinates "outside the office" through development of a positive interpersonal relationship ☐ Encourage camaraderie between team members and strengthening of their support systems ☐ Develop self-awareness ☐ Explain importance of mission within a higher strategic or moral purpose	**Task-Oriented (70%)** ☐ Accomplish the mission ☐ Monitor changes in the situation to reduce risk for unnecessary trauma ☐ Show confidence through technical, tactical, and leadership competence ☐ Share the same risk as your subordinates; show physical and moral courage ☐ Utilize clear and timely decision-making processes **Relational-Oriented (30%)** ☐ Know your limits and those of your subordinates ☐ Look at the situation from subordinates' perspective ☐ Trust and empower your team members ☐ Check on the well-being of subordinates	**Task-Oriented (35%)** ☐ Educate team members about potential PTSD symptoms; monitor for symptoms and provide clinical resources ☐ Review lessons learned from PTE ☐ Improve tactics and procedures to implement during next PTE **Relational-Oriented (65%)** ☐ Encourage support from team members and community ☐ Maintain an open dialogue and support network with subordinates ☐ Answer outlying existential questions ☐ See subordinates as unique with different coping needs ☐ Recognize subordinates for acts of excellence and courage ☐ Model coping flexibility

FIGURE 8.2. Leadership Behaviors that Maximize Subordinates on a Resilience Trajectory

through utilizing task-oriented behaviors that increase the self-efficacy of subordinates to successfully address the demands of future PTEs. This occurs through leaders instilling discipline and providing rigorous training that replicates the dangerous situation (e.g., elevated but safe levels of risk and stress). Such training enables individuals to hone their profession-specific skills and teaches them to appraise PTEs as challenges. Bandura refers to such experiences as "mastery experiences" and states that they enable individuals to "adopt strategies and courses of action designed to change hazardous environments into more benign ones."[47] For example, emergency service workers who were less trained for the specific PTEs that they faced at the World Trade Center on 9/11 were more likely to later develop PTSD.[48]

Another benefit of rigorous and profession-specific training is that it provides an opportunity for leaders to demonstrate and improve their tactical competence levels (e.g., decision making and technical and tactical expertise), thus increasing subordinates' positive assessment of their external resources. This can occur through succeeding in difficult training exercises and through establishing and training on "battle drills" that capture and synchronize the actions of unit members in anticipation for the most threatening PTEs (e.g., a surprise attack from enemy combatants for the military, an armed and barricaded suspect for a police force, and a firefighter injured in a burning building). Sweeney found that leaders who demonstrated competence during precombat operations enhanced the subsequent level of subordinates' trust in them during combat in Iraq, while leaders who failed to demonstrate competence decreased this level of trust.[49] As subordinates put their lives at risk to follow the orders of leaders, they may logically ask themselves, "Do I trust my leader with my life?" Sweeney's research suggests that part of the answer is determined by the leader's tactical competence demonstrated in the preparation phase.[50] Chapter 10 discusses how leaders can build trust. Other ways to help subordinates to prepare is through a rigorous, regular physical exercise program and through in-depth psychological training focused on understanding and managing how our bodies respond to PTEs.

Such training can instill social support in units because it pushes individuals to their limits and forces them to pull together, and this also increases their assessment of their external resources. Through relational-oriented leadership behaviors, leaders can further develop this social support by establishing positive interpersonal relationships with their subordinates and learning about their lives, their families, and their aspirations. This both creates a sense of family within the unit and strengthens the bonds between the unit and subordinates' family members (see chapter 11 for insights on how leaders can build strong teams). These bonds help to improve the level of trust that subordinates have for their leaders. Following a competent and caring leader whom they trust into the responding to PTE phase can greatly increase subordinates' appraisal of resources to face the demands of PTEs.

Leaders can also utilize these relationships to help their subordinates reach their full potential to face PTEs through regular formal and informal counseling. Dangerous-situation leaders who are able to integrate three essential characteristics of positive

interpersonal relationships—genuineness (being honest and real with subordinates), unconditional positive regard (loving every aspect of subordinates and being nonjudgmental), and empathy (taking on the worldview of subordinates to fully understand them)—will create subordinates who are "more self-responsible, more creative," and "better able to adapt to new problems."[51]

Effective leaders prioritize training that enables them to integrate task- and relational-oriented behaviors, as well as enable subordinates to learn to take personal meaning from PTEs. As one example, though there are real-life risks associated with conducting realistic training, leaders should integrate the realism of PTEs by simulating wounded or injured subordinates and requiring other subordinates to provide them actual medical treatment (e.g., administer IVs as vehicles race to medical treatment facilitates). This training can save the lives of injured or wounded subordinates in the next phase, but it also helps subordinates start to answer difficult and existential questions such as: "What would it be like if I was injured or if someone on my team died?" In this phase, leaders can also use relational-oriented behaviors during one-on-one conversations to help subordinates answer such questions and describe the purpose of the training and of future missions. When leaders provide a clear purpose to their subordinates, they increase the latter's ability to interpret the future consequences of PTEs. Given the importance of both leadership behaviors during the preparation for PTE phase, leaders can optimize the psychological body armor of subordinates when they integrate a good balance between task-oriented (50 percent) and relational-oriented (50 percent) behaviors.

Moreover, effective leaders will also increase hardiness in their subordinates prior to the PTE. Personality hardiness is a characteristic sense that life is worthwhile, that we have control over our future, and that life changes and transitions are meaningful and valuable.[52] Researchers have utilized the personality characteristic of hardiness to differentiate individuals (i.e., Gulf War veterans, Israeli soldiers, Norwegian cadets, and Iraq/Afghan veterans) with reduced levels of PTSD symptoms from those with elevated levels of PTSD symptoms. Hardy individuals have a higher sense of commitment to such things as their work, activities, and relationships gained through possessing a strong purpose in their lives; have a great sense of control over their surroundings and their reactions to events; and appraise events as challenges (as already discussed). Leaders can help subordinates develop hardiness through a rigorous and regular physical exercise program and through in-depth psychological training focused on understanding and managing how our bodies prepare and respond to PTEs.[53]

Responding to PTEs

If leaders are able to successfully integrate both types of leadership behaviors during the preparation for PTE phase, then their subordinates will be more likely to perceive a strong sense of social support from their unit and be more trusting of their leader because he or she previously demonstrated his or her competence and established a positive interpersonal

relationship with them. As a result, the leaders will have maximized the resources of their subordinates as they face the demands of PTEs in the response phase, thus increasing the probability that they will see PTEs as challenges and will experience a resilience trajectory. The absence of any of these protective components may create cracks in the psychological body armor of subordinates and place them at greater risk for appraising PTEs as threats and experiencing a PTSD trajectory. As we discuss the leadership behaviors necessary during this phase, it is important to note that dangerous-situation professionals provide a key service for society, and it is their professional obligation to complete their profession-specific tasks.

These professionals must utilize task-oriented behaviors during the response phase to accomplish their mission. Given that PTEs can create situations that are time-sensitive, ambiguous, and potentially deadly, it is also important to employ task-oriented behaviors to reduce the number of unnecessary and avoidable traumatic events that subordinates may face during this phase. Leaders are expected to lead by example through sharing the same risks, showing physical courage in the face of danger, and demonstrating their competence.[54] There is considerable evidence to support the notion that leaders must speed up their decision-making process during these situations because "a leader who can react quickly in emergencies will be judged [to be] better by followers than one who cannot."[55]

Competence is key in this phase if the leader is to cement the lessons learned during the preparation phase. Inaction or incompetent leadership will negate the trust built in the preparation phase. Captain Thompson's account highlights this.

> Trust is multidirectional. At that moment, the battalion commander trusted me to make a decision. If the soldiers were too sleep-deprived to effectively scan their surroundings and safely drive enormous, armored trucks in the dark on dirt roads, it was my responsibility to decline. Likewise, I trusted my platoon and understood their capabilities, and they trusted me. Our established relationships set the foundation for the platoon to complete the mission.

The trust Captain Thompson had established with her subordinates was key to their mission's success. At the core of this trust was the understanding that individuals understood both their own capabilities and those of the other team members and leaders. While PTEs are occurring, there will likely be little time to integrate relational-oriented leader behaviors, so leaders will have to rely on the positive interpersonal relationships built in the preparation phase. These relationships will directly influence the level of social support and resulting assessment of resources available to subordinates as they face PTEs.[56] If there is time available and the situation allows, though, it may be beneficial for leaders to take a momentary pause and check in with subordinates to assess their well-being and see the situation from their perspective.

Task-oriented behaviors are needed when situations are extremely ambiguous, dangerous, and unstructured,[57] thus, leaders should continue to maximize the psychological

body armor of subordinates during this phase by prioritizing task-oriented behaviors over relational-oriented behaviors (about 70 percent to 30 percent, as shown in figure 8.2).

After the PTE

In order to maximize the number of subordinates on a resilience trajectory, leaders should facilitate coping flexibility in their units after the PTE. Each individual is unique and will need a different style of coping during this phase. Many subordinates may only need to integrate a forward focus coping style to continue on a resilience trajectory. Certain task-oriented leader behaviors may help this forward focus coping, such as helping subordinates to learn lessons from the responding to PTE phase. For example, leaders can help subordinates develop new tactics and training to integrate the lessons learned to help the unit prepare to face other PTEs in the future. Captain Thompson pointed out that it was important for the team to adopt a growth mindset.

> During missions, we did make mistakes. It was essential for the members of our platoon to be honest with each other. No plan is perfect after first contact. You need to adjust. After missions, we spent time discussing what went right, what could have gone better, and how to improve the next time. This knowledge was integrated ASAP.

One of the characteristics of PTEs is that they may "shatter" subordinates' beliefs about themselves, the world, or other people (i.e., PMIE), thus requiring team members to integrate an emotional processing coping style. Many of the initial symptoms of PTSD can be reduced after individuals are able to process and make meaning of secondary emotions and the consequences of facing PTEs.[58] Cognitive Processing Therapy, a form of psychotherapy developed by Resick, significantly reduced PTSD symptoms for veterans compared to a control group.[59] In order to facilitate this emotional processing, the leadership style needed "in the heat of battle may be qualitatively different than that needed to help a unit psychologically recover from catastrophic losses after the battle ends."[60] Therefore, we recommend that leaders utilize a leadership style in this phase that favors relational-oriented behaviors over task-oriented behaviors (about 70 percent to 30 percent) so that they can address the individual needs of their subordinates (see figure 8.2). The following comments from Michael Baker, a SWAT leader, help to highlight this point:

> I don't look at someone as a tool. They are individuals; each one of them is a unique person. For me, it is important to address the needs of the people. You have your "human being" face on, and you ask how they are doing. You need to be perceived as caring and sincere . . . believable. It is one of the duties and traits of a true leader.

It is important for leaders to create an environment that is nonjudgmental and safe for individuals to freely and flexibly cope. Leaders should talk one-on-one with subordinates to continue the positive interpersonal relationships established with subordinates in

the preparation for PTE phase and strengthened during the response to the PTE phase. Leaders can educate subordinates about the different coping styles as well as help them identify their necessary coping styles and things the leader can do to help them integrate these styles. Of course, leaders will probably also have subordinates who need to integrate a combination of the two coping styles. Captain Thompson described how the NCOs in the unit successfully utilized a blended style of leadership to facilitate subordinates' coping:

> The battalion staff ensured resources were available for individuals, but honestly the NCOs held the team together. Some soldiers are afraid of "looking weak" if they admit their struggles. The NCOs knew how to listen to their subordinates' stories and make them feel heard. In the best cases, the NCOs helped the soldier find meaning for their story. Or at least feel like they were not alone. I remember when a senior NCO shared to the formation that he went to behavioral health counseling and framed it as a strength. Leaders should help remove the invisible barriers to clinical resources.

We contend that two of the most important ways for leaders to increase coping flexibility in their units is through further developing their own self-awareness and through modeling coping flexibility for their subordinates. This will be especially important for subordinates who might need to integrate the emotional processing coping style, since the stigma against employing such a coping style is quite strong in dangerous-situation professions.[61] Leaders who allow themselves to utilize and demonstrate an emotional processing coping style, especially when it is not needed, are very likely to increase the coping flexibility available to their subordinates. It may be helpful for leaders to discuss the impact of PTEs upon themselves and how they are flexibly coping with it and to disclose to subordinates that they have sought professional services to assist with their own coping flexibility.[62] Such disclosures can "give permission" to subordinates to employ the full range of coping styles. However, the leader must also be able to flexibly transition back to forward focus coping in preparation for the next inevitable PTE.

LEADERS FACILITATING SOCIAL SUPPORT

Leaders who successfully integrate the behaviors in the three PTE phases create the environment for the development of social support—a significant protective factor for subordinates. Social support for subordinates is the perceived helpfulness of their social interactions both internal and external to their units. Social support was established as an important element of mitigating mental disorder in 1897, when scientists identified a lack of connectedness, love, or social support as among the chief causes of suicidal behavior.[63] Researchers have since studied the importance of social support as a protective factor against the development of PTSD in many different dangerous-situation professions.

Research across all U.S. military branches has found that decreased social support can exacerbate PTSD symptoms and increase violent behavior.[64] Results of a longitudinal study on World War II veterans found that better-quality relationships with fellow soldiers was a factor in protecting against PTSD, especially in individuals with more PTE exposure.[65] Vietnam veterans with high levels of social support were 180 percent less likely to develop PTSD than those with lower levels. In 2018, the U.S. Air Force Community Assessment Survey reported that PTSD symptoms were less likely to occur for Air Force personnel who experienced support from their families, unit, and community when they returned from combat.[66] It is clear that a supportive relationship with the leader also protects against symptoms of PTSD. Lt. Gen. Hal Moore, USA (Ret.) served as the battalion commander for the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry during the Vietnam War. In the Battle of Ia Drang, his unit was encircled by a numerically superior enemy. Moore captured the essence of social support when he later wrote, "We discovered in that depressing, hellish place, where death was our constant companion, that we loved each other."

"Mateship," a similar term for the Australian military, dates back to the early settlers who endured the difficult conditions of the Outback and then to Australian servicemen in World War I, who placed "more importance on 'not letting down their mates' than on their own well-being." Promoting social support for military veterans after they transition out of the military into civilian life has also been found to be an important factor in assisting them to successfully reintegrate into postmilitary life.[67] Research also demonstrated the importance of social support with firefighters. Lee and colleagues found that firefighters who reported high social support had lower levels of PTSD symptoms, and firefighters who reported low levels of social support had the highest levels of PTSD symptoms.[68]

CONCLUSION

Given the nature of their work, dangerous-situation professionals will always face trauma—including death. Although they are far more likely than the general population to develop PTSD, this does not mean that a PTSD trajectory is inevitable. Leaders who strengthen their subordinates' psychological body armor can help them to a resilience trajectory by influencing them to cognitively appraise PTEs as challenges and to apply coping flexibility afterward. Leadership and social support are the most important protective components of the body armor, and leaders can integrate specific supportive behaviors that maximize the likelihood that subordinates will experience a resilience trajectory. Specifically, leaders should (1) integrate a balance between task-oriented and relational-oriented behaviors in preparation for PTEs, (2) prioritize task-oriented behaviors while responding to PTEs, and (3) prioritize relational-oriented behaviors after the PTEs. Figure 8.2 organizes these leadership behaviors in a checklist for easy utilization with subordinates. Fortunately, these behaviors can be learned and applied effectively in the appropriate situations.[69]

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. If you are reading this chapter, then the probability is high that you will at some point lead subordinates during a potentially traumatic event (PTE) that includes the possibility of death and poses a threat to their physical or psychological health.
2. Two critical factors intersect to determine the strength of your subordinates' "psychological body armor" and how PTEs impact their psychological health: *cognitive appraisal* and *coping flexibility*.
3. Cognitive appraisal is a subordinate's immediate assessment of a PTE as it is occurring, and helps that person decide whether to view a PTE as a *threat* or a *challenge*.
4. Coping flexibility allows the individual to engage in two different styles of coping based on the demands of the PTE: (1) *forward focus*: maintain goals and plans, reduce painful emotions, and remain calm; and (2) *emotional processing*: fully experience the painful emotions and reflect upon the meaning of the PTE.
5. An individual who appraises the PTE as a threat and then demonstrates coping inflexibility is more likely to experience the PTSD trajectory.
6. An individual who appraises the PTE as a challenge and then demonstrates coping flexibility is more likely to experience the trajectory of resilience (they may experience temporary reactions to the PTE, but these reactions then return to baseline levels).
7. Your actions and behaviors as a leader preparing for PTEs, responding to PTEs, and after the PTEs will directly impact the ability of your unit to accomplish its missions, as well as the resulting psychological health or trajectory of your subordinates.
8. Effective leaders influence subordinates primarily through two different types of behaviors: (1) *task-oriented*: accomplish the mission, define tasks and work roles, ensure subordinates meet clearly established standards of task performance; and (2) *relational-oriented*: establish supportive environments based on strong interpersonal relationships, show concern and respect for subordinates, treat subordinates as equals, focus on subordinates' welfare.
9. Leaders must be able to shift between task-oriented and relational-oriented leadership behaviors depending on changes to environmental demands and/or the timing and phase of the mission.
10. Specifically, leaders should (1) integrate a balance between task-oriented and relational-oriented behaviors in preparation for PTEs, (2) prioritize task-oriented behaviors while responding to PTEs, and (3) prioritize relational-oriented behaviors after the PTEs.
11. Leaders increase coping flexibility in their units through further developing their own self-awareness and through modeling coping flexibility for their subordinates.

12. Leaders who implement the appropriate leadership behaviors during each phase can strengthen the psychological body armor of their subordinates, increase the number of subordinates who experience a resilience trajectory, and optimize the performance of their organization.

NOTES

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CHAPTER 9

Skills and Strategies for Optimizing Meaning Making after Adversity in High-Risk, Service-Oriented Occupational Environments

WALTER J. SOWDEN, MICHAEL H. MOBBS, AND KIMBERLY DEFIORI

MANY BELIEVE THAT WHAT SEPARATES HUMANS from our primate relatives is our ability to make meaning from our experiences.[1] Unlike other animals, we do not merely react to our immediate environment, we also strive to situate our moment-to-moment experiences into a larger, coherent narrative. Although this process is central to the human experience, it is most salient during real or imagined change and is particularly profound in response to *adversity* (i.e., emotionally significant, stress-producing events such as hardship, loss, and/or trauma).[2] Lay conceptions of "meaning making" view it as an important source of motivation and strength as a person works through adversity,[3] but this is not always true. Meaning making in response to adversity is a double-edged sword. Sometimes this process helps us adaptively adjust to adversity, but at other times it perpetuates difficulty and harm.[4] This forking path becomes more evident when adversity is experienced in contexts characterized by high levels of dynamism, demand, and/or danger, as epitomized by prototypical *high-risk, service-oriented occupations* (HSOs) such as the military, law enforcement, and first responders.[5] Recent research is shedding light on the mechanisms that influence the relationship between adversity, meaning making, and *thriving* (psychological adjustment, adaptive behavior, and optimized well-being),[6] versus *suffering* (psychological maladjustment, maladaptive behavior, and increased pathology).[7] The time is right to examine the science of meaning making as it applies to *high-risk, service-oriented occupational environments* (HSOEs).

This chapter reviews the state of the science of meaning making and applies it to the context of HSOEs. We start by describing how meaning making unfolds. Next we map

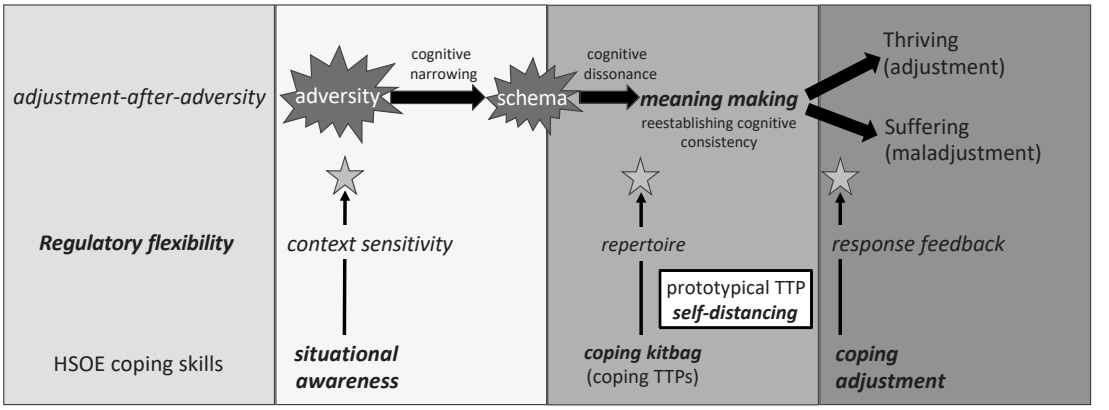

FIGURE 9.1. The Meaning-Making Process
The process of meaning making embedded in the adjustment-after-adversity process, adjustment after adversity mapped on to the theory of regulatory flexibility, the three components of regulatory flexibility applied to HSOEs as coping skills (situational awareness, coping kitbag, and coping adjustment), and highlighting self-distancing as a prototypical coping tactic, technique, and procedure (TTP) in HSOEs.

a scientifically backed model (*regulatory flexibility*)[8] onto the *adjustment-after-adversity* process, highlighting three skills individuals should cultivate to optimize meaning making. We conclude by describing coping tactics (*self-distancing*)[9] that individuals in HSOEs can utilize throughout the adjustment-after-adversity process that have been shown to promote thriving through meaning making (see figure 9.1). We hope to equip HSO professionals and leaders with an appreciation for how integral meaning making is in the context of HSOEs and to offer tips and tools to optimize adaptive adjustment after adversity through meaning making.

MEANING MAKING

There is no single, universally accepted definition of "meaning making."[10] One of the more highly regarded and useful interpretations comes from Crystal Park, who defines meaning making simply as the "restoration of meaning in the context of highly stressful situations."[11] This conceptualization of meaning making is particularly useful in the current context because along with explicitly recognizing the context of highly stressful situations, it begins with the word "restoration," which elicits thoughts of something being returned to form, renewed, and perhaps even improved from its original condition. Moreover, Park's definition appropriately describes meaning making as a tool for psychologically transforming a potentially confusing, chaotic, and/or threatening sequence of events into a coherent narrative that provides a sense of understanding, accomplishment, and fulfillment.

Think about a popular genre of TV show—the type in which a team of ambitious contractors descend upon a dilapidated house and in the course of the show transform the decrepit building into a beautiful and functional home. Like the contractors and the

house, meaning making restores, or "fixes up," the narrative of our lives after we have experienced adversity (or any significant change, for that matter). However, before getting into how meaning making restores our narratives, let's first discuss how adverse, stress-producing events disrupt, and can sometimes even shatter, those narratives.

How Adversity Disrupts Our Narratives

We are fundamentally motivated to understand the world and everything in it.[12] As we move through our lives, we experience things, and as we experience each thing, we accumulate information about it as a forum for action, determining its nature as a tool or obstacle that either aids or impedes our ability to accomplish our goals. To make this process efficient, we create a *mental model* or *schema* for each thing.[13] A mental model is exactly what it sounds like, a psychological facsimile of something real. Think about a toy model, say a 1970 Corvette LT-1. It's not the real thing—there's no working engine, the tires don't have any air in them, and there are no fuzzy dice hanging from the windshield—but it is to scale, it looks like a Corvette, and if you asked somebody what it was, they would likely say, "a '70 Stingray." It's a representation of the real thing—not the real thing, but a model of the real thing. In just this way our minds create a subjective model for things we encounter that help us efficiently and successfully interact with the world and everything in it.

However, let's say your first exposure to the word "Corvette" was with the 1970 LT-1, but during that initial introduction, it wasn't referred to as a 1970 Corvette LT-1, but rather your dad simply referred to it as a Corvette, and when he did, it was with such reverence that you not only developed a deep sense of appreciation, awe, and even love for the Corvette, but it also provided a meaningful connection between you and your dad. Then, a few years later, you come across another car referred to as a Corvette, let's say, the 1984 C4. It's called a Corvette, but it sure doesn't look, sound, or feel like the Corvette you know. You don't like this Corvette. What is happening? This doesn't make sense.

This moment is an example of what psychologists call *accommodation*.[14] Accommodation occurs when a new piece of information comes into our purview (e.g., there is more than one version of Corvette) that requires us to update our mental representation of something (e.g., Corvette = the 1970 LT-1). Most of the time the process of accommodation is a necessary and benign part of the learning process. However, there are times when this process is fraught. Problematic accommodation occurs when the newly available information challenges a schema in such a way that it threatens our *self-concept*—those things that pertain to, make up, or influence the sense of who we are,[15] and/or our worldview—our basic beliefs about how things work together.[16] I love the Corvette, right?

The need for *psychological consistency* is fundamental.[17] Our minds will go to great lengths to ensure that the narratives of our lives are coherent. It could be argued that the need for psychological consistency underpins some of the most thought-about, examined, and debated theories in social psychology.[18] You would, for example, be hard-pressed to

find a more pondered, researched, and discussed social psychological theory than cognitive dissonance.[19] The theory states that when our cognitions (i.e., "knowledge, opinion, or belief about the environment, about oneself, or one's behavior")[20] are at odds, an aversive feeling of dissonance (incongruence) is produced, and this feeling is so uncomfortable that our minds will perform some interesting tricks, like rewriting our personal psychological history, to restore a state of cognitive harmony or equilibrium.[21] In other words, when we are faced with two (or more) thoughts that do not agree with each another, our minds are compelled to align them.

Cognitive dissonance is not a deliberate (controlled, reflective) psychological process, but rather an automatic (involuntary, reflexive) one. We don't will ourselves to patch up narrative inconsistencies when they occur; our brains have evolved to do it all by themselves. Our reactions to cognitive dissonance are automatic, governed below the level of consciousness. We don't deliberately tell our lungs to inflate and deflate to regulate the flow of oxygen into our bodies; nor do we tell our minds to harmonize our cognitions. Under ideal conditions, cognitive consistency is an adaptive activity. However, the process of cognitive harmonizing occurs even when the new information is appraised in a way that is so incongruent with already existing schemas that the dissonance reconciliation process turns from uncomfortable and manageable to distressful and injurious.[22]

How Meaning Making Restores Our Narratives

Just as we use a face mask to process toxic air so that we can breathe, when we experience adversity we use meaning making to process information so that cognitive consistency can be restored. To illustrate how meaning making restores cognitive consistency after adversity, let's return to our talented TV contractors as they set out to renovate the rundown house. Before we get into the nuts and bolts of the restoration process, however, let's take a small, albeit important, step back to understand the circumstances in which meaning making is invoked.

Meaning making is triggered only if the appraisal of the adversity is so incompatible with existing schemas that psychological distress is experienced. This is like the decision the producer makes when determining which home improvement stories are compelling enough for TV. Just like charm and potential are necessary for a house to get on the show, pain (i.e., severe dissonance) is necessary for meaning making to automatically commence. And just as the contractors go full steam ahead with the renovations once they get the producer's approval, during adversity, once the dissonance-induced stress becomes painful, ready or not, here comes meaning making.

There are three basic pathways meaning making leverages cognitive dissonance to reestablish cognitive equilibrium. The first is *accommodation*, a process we have already discussed. Accommodation occurs when new information changes a schema (e.g., observing the 1984 C4 requires a change in our perception of Corvette). The second way, *assimilation*,[23] works in the opposite direction. Assimilation occurs when we mold new

information to fit into an already formulated schema (e.g., the 1984 C4 might be called a corvette, but it is not a Corvette). The third pathway is *adaptation*, a combination of accommodation and assimilation in which an altogether separate piece of information is used/created to synthesize the new information with the schema so that the integrity of both pieces of information is maintained (e.g., within the construct of Corvette there are different models, and both the 1970 LT-1 and the 1984 C4 are Corvettes, but they are different models of Corvette, and I don't have to like both).[24]

This description of the psychological underpinnings of meaning making in response to adversity is an extremely simplified characterization. We recognize that there is an ongoing argument in the literature about the adaptive utility of each of these processes,[25] and the nuances of this argument are beyond the scope of our chapter. What is important here is knowing that these processes are both automatic and necessary to meaning making and adjustment after adversity.[26] If left unmanaged, however, meaning making can lead to less-than-optimal outcomes. Additionally, by presenting meaning making this way, we can now take this basic, context-agnostic model and build context-specific characteristics on to it to gain a nuanced appreciation for how meaning making manifests in the extremely complicated context of HSOEs.

It's not enough to have the ability to make meaning from adversity. As with any tool, you must know when and how to apply it to the situation at hand. When you have a whole tree to cut into firewood, a chainsaw is a great tool. It should make your job a whole lot easier and more efficient. However, if you don't know how to operate a chainsaw (how to start it, where to hold it, what type of fuel it uses) or under what conditions it is best to employ it (cutting logs versus a delicate carving), you're probably going to end up doing more harm than good.

In a similar vein, meaning making, like most tools, is value neutral. It's neither innately good nor bad. Its utility is dependent on the situation and circumstances in which it is being utilized. Under certain conditions, meaning making leads to growth, prosperity, and happiness. However, under other circumstances it leads to harm, failure, and despair. Identifying the specific characteristics of a particular context is important to understanding how and when to apply meaning making (see chapter 7 for a discussion of these conditions). Without an appreciation for the interaction between meaning making and the specific parameters of the situation, you may end up with a bigger problem than a bunch of uncut wood.

Meaning-Making Tips and Tools for HSOE Professionals and Leaders

- Meaning making (the synthesis of new and existing information) is an automatic, uniquely human response to adversity. In and of itself, meaning making is neither adaptive nor maladaptive. The way meaning making is facilitated influences the adjustment-after-adversity process. When managed appropriately, meaning making promotes thriving. However, if it is mismanaged or unmanaged, meaning making can exacerbate suffering.

- It is just as important for individuals and leaders in HSOEs to anticipate, recognize, and manage the meaning-making process that follows adversity as it is to anticipate, recognize, and manage adversity.
- Developing an appreciation for the psychology of meaning making in response to adversity (adverse events disrupt psychological consistency, which the human mind steadfastly strives to maintain) will help individuals and leaders understand how to intervene and adaptively manage the meaning-making process.
- Individuals and leaders should actively and mindfully (versus passively and mindlessly) manage the meaning making after adversity process.

REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY

The process of meaning making is part of a larger adjustment-after-adversity process.[27] Adjustment after adversity is a complex and dynamic process that begins when an individual experiences an adverse event, ends when the individual is embedded in their new reality that includes the adverse event, and includes everything the individual implicitly and explicitly experiences along the way. As explained earlier, within this larger process, meaning making occurs as the mind attempts to maintain psychological consistency by addressing the cognitive dissonance created by integrating new information (adversity) into previously existing cognitive representations (mental models, schemas). Moreover, along with meaning making being an automatic (vice deliberate) psychological process that occurs when an individual experiences severe adversity that reshapes their self-concept and/or worldview, it is also value neutral or double-edged. It sometimes promotes thriving (adaptive adjustment), but at other times it hinders the adjustment and leads to suffering (maladjustment). Thus, to optimize meaning making and thriving it is important to know both when and how to intervene during the adjustment-after-adversity process.

Bonanno and Burton's theory of *regulatory flexibility* posits that the responsive deployment of self-regulatory (e.g., coping) strategies based on the situation is more important to achieving one's goals (e.g., adaptive adjustment after adversity) than using primary definitional factors such as characteristics of the individual, environment, or strategy.[28] Stated differently, it is more important to know how and when to use different strategies based on the situation than to rely on the philosophy that some strategies are inherently better or worse than other strategies. A coping strategy is simply the method a person uses to manage his or her response to adversity.[29] Coping strategies come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from avoidance[30] to rumination (introspective examination),[31] from situational manipulations (e.g., intentionally limiting one's exposure something harmful)[32] to cognitive and behavioral modifications (e.g., reinterpreting situations and reprograming responses),[33] and from problem-focused approaches (e.g., developing a plan to respond to the stressor)[34] to emotion regulation–focused strategies (e.g., recognizing and responding to one's emotional response to the stressor).[35] The ways people cope in response to adversity

are both idiosyncratic and diverse. People develop their own ways for dealing with adversity, but if left unchecked, the application of these methods is not always adaptive.[36]

Not all strategies are created equal. Researchers in multiple disciplines have examined the efficacy of the various ways in which people cope with adversity,[37] and one could argue that some strategies are more productive, adaptive, and healthier than others.[38] For example, problem-focused coping strategies are typically more effective than emotion regulation–focused approaches.[39] Similarly, a large body of research has shown that emotional reframing or reappraisal (changing the way one thinks of their emotional responses)[40] is likely to lead to more effective and adaptive outcomes than avoidance or suppression (blocking out or pushing away an emotional response).[41] However, as robust as these lines of research have been, both have uncovered situations in which emotion-focused and suppression-based strategies are more productive than problem-focused and reconstrual-based strategies, respectively.[42] Clark and Finkel, for example, found that the relationship between emotional regulation strategies and adaptive adjustment was dependent on the social context in which the process unfolded.[43] Contexts typified by formal, business-like relationships increased the likelihood that emotional suppression would lead to positive adjustment, whereas emotional expression was more adaptive in the context of family-like, tight-knit relationships.

The central idea behind regulatory flexibility is that coping strategies are neither good nor bad, or that there are some strategies that should be used and others that should not, but rather that the effectiveness of a coping strategy depends on the situation (holistically speaking) in which it is employed. Avoidance is adaptive under certain circumstances, for example, and reframing is maladaptive under others. Furthermore, individuals should have a broad set of coping strategies at their disposal to optimize meaning making and thriving. However, just having a variety of coping strategies is not enough. Maybe even more important than possessing a bevy of coping strategies is knowing when, why, and how to employ a particular coping strategy to best match the situation.

Although there are several scientific models we could use to think about the adjustment-after-adversity process,[44] we mapped the theory of regulatory flexibility onto the adjustment-after-adversity process because it seemed not only to capture the state of the science pertaining to the adjustment-after-adversity process, but also seemed to appropriately fit the context of HSOEs. The theory of regulatory flexibility not only integrates the fields of emotion regulation, self-control, and coping into an overarching self-regulation construct, it positions the ability to flexibly employ different coping strategies to match the situation as one of the central factors influencing the adjustment-after-adversity process.[45] Moreover, in addition to consolidating the study of self-regulation into a coherent construct, regulatory flexibility also astutely reflects the movement away from strategy-centered perspectives (i.e., what strategies are more adaptive) and toward a more dynamic interactionist perspective (what is the most adaptive strategy for this person in the current situation).[46] Coincidentally, this change of focus in the science of coping, meaning making,

and adjustment parallels a similarly transformative evolution in the management philosophy of HSOs. Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror in 2001 the U.S. military has moved away from a centrally dictated, hierarchal, command-and-control-based management model to a more decentralized, situationally adaptive, mission-essentialist philosophy epitomized by the U.S. Army's doctrine of mission command.[47] The thread connecting these two movements: situation based, goal driven self-regulation. Coping, like military tactics, is not one-size-fits-all. Success is born not from the *what* but rather from a tailored application of the *what*, through the *when*, *how*, and *why*.

There are three main components to regulatory flexibility: *context sensitivity*, *repertoire*, and *response feedback*.[48] Context sensitivity is the ability to notice "impinging demands and opportunities from the situational context as they emerge over and above the normative background of ongoing regulatory concerns and processes and to determine the most appropriate regulatory strategy in response to those demands or opportunities."[49] In other words, context sensitivity is being able to understand how patterns are developing and changes are occurring, to determine what is normal and what is not, and importantly, to recognize if and how phenomena within the environment are interacting and impacting one another. A repertoire is the number and type of coping strategies a person has at their disposal as well as their degree of readiness to adaptively deploy those strategies during the adjustment-after-adversity process. Response feedback is the "post-implementation ability to monitor the effectiveness of the chosen strategy and either maintain or modify the strategy needed."[50] In other words, it's the capacity to evaluate, after employing a coping strategy, if it is working or not and, depending on the assessment, to either hold steady, build on that strategy, or switch to a different strategy. All in real time.

When mapped on to the adjustment-after-adversity process, the three component attributes of regulatory flexibility highlight three resonant "skills" individuals who operate in HSOEs should cultivate for making meaning. The first is the ability to maintain situational awareness, which squares with context sensitivity. The second is the development of a coping kitbag, which lines up with repertoire, and the third skill is the capacity to adjust coping in response to situational needs, which coincides with *response feedback*.

Maintaining Situational Awareness/Context Sensitivity

HSOEs are best described as erratically paced; they are characterized by long periods of boredom, short moments of chaos, and rapid transitions between the two. In those moments of chaos (high dynamism, demand, and danger), information comes in fast and from multiple disparate sources.[51] To function in these environments individuals must consistently maintain situational awareness.[52] Situational awareness is the ability to "effectively perceive, thoroughly comprehend (appropriately judge), and accurately predict what is occurring in the environment."[53]

If you have situational awareness, you are attuned to the environment and you observe keenly, quickly distinguishing between important and unimportant information and

attending to the important and disregarding the unimportant. Situational awareness is the firefighter dealing with one burning building while simultaneously attending to the surrounding structures, constantly assessing the likelihood of when and where the fire might spread and processing those various hypotheticals to anticipate how and when to redirect assets when the fire jumps. It is about understanding both the gestalt and the interworking of the situation (the situation-as-a-whole and how all the elements fit together) all the while scanning for and recognizing patterns, irregularities, and change. Situational awareness is keeping your "head on a swivel" while constantly "connecting the dots." It's developing a clear picture of what is happening and being able to process, distill, and incorporate what's occurring in the environment into task-relevant knowledge.

Developing a Coping Kitbag/Repertoire

In any occupational context there are tasks (e.g., fast food restaurants that specialize in selling hamburgers need to be able to make hamburgers). In the military these tasks are called missions (e.g., conduct a hasty attack). To complete the task, a method must be selected (do you want to grill, fry, or microwave the hamburger?). In the military these methods are called tactics (an ambush is one way to conduct a hasty attack). When deciding which method to use to complete a particular task, it's helpful to have a detailed, philosophically based description of the method (cooking a hamburger over an open flame is not only more efficient but the burger tastes, looks, and smells better than when it's fried or microwaved). In the military this is called technique. Although an element of surprise and occupation of key terrain are necessary, an ambush is most effective against an enemy force that is larger and/or better equipped than your own. When these conditions are not present, a frontal or holding attack might be a more appropriate method for conducting a hasty attack. Along with a theoretical description of why and when you should use a particular method, it is important to have a detailed, step-by-step set of instructions on how to execute the method (before grilling the hamburger, apply oil to the grill to keep the meat from sticking, then heat the grill and maintain a steady temperature of 425° Fahrenheit, then cook each side of the hamburger for exactly eight minutes). In the military these instructions are called procedures. To conduct an ambush, the squad (i.e., team) leader must break the squad in to three subteams (security, support, and assault elements), identify key locations (the ambush site and the objective rally point), conduct a reconnaissance, position the subteams, and finally initiate/lead the attack.

Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures

Tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) are ubiquitous in HSOEs. There are TTPs for nearly everything—from performing a raid[54] to conducting cybersecurity.[55] There are even TTPs for organizing logistics[56] and setting up contracts.[57] In essence, a tactic, with its associated techniques and procedures, is a single prescriptive behavior presented with hierarchically descriptive degrees of specificity. A tactic is the broad description of what

the behavior is; techniques are coarse philosophically based descriptions of when and why the behavior should be performed; and procedures are the detailed, fine-grained, step-by-step instructions of how to perform the behavior. TTPs are easily understood and applied behavioral prescriptions for optimizing the odds of task completion (i.e., mission accomplishment) in HSOEs. Broadly speaking, the TTP framework is not just an effective method for optimizing mission accomplishment by matching the right behavior to the current task. It is also a useful way to think about how to respond effectively to an adverse event by matching the right behavior to the current situation. In this context, the mission is to adaptively adjust after adversity, and the various tactics are coping strategies.

Adjusting Coping Tactics/Feedback Responsiveness

Coping is not a one-shot, fire-and-forget endeavor. As in marksmanship, the first attempt rarely completes the mission. The crucial skill, along with accuracy, is the ability to engage the target, effectively assess the results of that action, modify the procedure where necessary, reengage, and efficiently repeat that cycle until the mission is complete. This is true for meaning making as well. In the dynamic, demanding, and dangerous context of HSOEs, it is unlikely that the first coping strategy will prove effective throughout the meaning-making or adjustment-after-adversity process. In fact, due to the ever-changing nature of HSOEs, the odds are that an individual will have to engage, assess, modify, and reengage. Like maintaining situational awareness and building a coping kitbag, the military has a euphemism for this process—adjusting fire—and this ability to adjust coping tactics during meaning making is critical to thriving after adversity.

Another way to think about this skill is through another commonly used military euphemism: *troop-to-task*. Military units always have more things to do than there are resources available to do them. Similarly, after experiencing adversity, there is usually more information to process than the cognitive resources we have available. Troop-to-task is a tool that military leaders use to manage the myriad missions they have with the limited number of people they are assigned (doing more with less). The idea is simple. On a piece of paper or whiteboard, create two columns. In one column list everything that needs to get done, in order of precedence (i.e., priorities of work, tasks by priority). In the other column list all the people assigned to the organization and their skillset (the alpha roster; troops by capability). Starting at the top of the task list, draw a line connecting each task to the best person or people for the job. This process is constantly revisited; tasks are removed when completed, new tasks are added and prioritized when assigned, people are removed and added when they leave or join the unit, and, importantly, connections are maintained and changed based on an evaluation of fit between troops and tasks. The troop-to-task model changes constantly to reflect everything the organization is engaged in at any given time. Just as a unit uses the troop-to-task algorithm to optimize mission accomplishment, an individual's adaptive adjustment

after adversity requires constantly matching resources to requirements according to the ever-changing demands of the situation during meaning making. Figure 9.2 lists tips and tools for leaders and HSOE professionals.

Now that we've identified the basic skills necessary to positively influence meaning making and the adjustment-after-adversity process, we'll finish by describing coping tactics individuals can utilize throughout the adjustment-after-adversity process that promote adaptive meaning making and can increase the odds of thriving after adversity through meaning making in HSOEs.

SELF-DISTANCING

Humans are egocentric creatures.[58] We see the world through the lens of the self, particularly when we are experiencing adversity. Adversity breaks up our personal narratives and disrupts our sense of cognitive consistency. This disruption causes a state of negative affect/psychological pain (i.e., cognitive dissonance) that we are inherently motivated to address through meaning making (integrating the adversity into our existing self-relevant mental models/schemas). To address this, the mind commits its cognitive resources (e.g., attention, working memory, judgment) to the problem. This zeroing in, or cognitive narrowing,[59] is an adaptive process that helps ensure we are doing whatever we can to address the most immediate threat to our self-concept and/or worldview in the most expeditious and efficient way possible. However, this narrowing of focus has its drawbacks, because when we focus exclusively on one thing, we simultaneously neglect everything else.

Cognitive narrowing is particularly problematic in the dynamic, demanding, and dangerous contexts of HSOEs, where transitions are frequent, unpredictable, and extreme; information is voluminous, irregular, and consequential; and adversity is frequent, variable, and severe. Thus, the need for broad situational awareness is crucial. When dealing with adversity in HSOEs, we can't afford to pay exclusive attention to any one event. We need to address the adversity while simultaneously being ready for the next critical/adversity-producing event. Right behind that 50-meter target are two 100-meter, soon to be 5-meter targets, and following those two targets are several 200-meter targets closing in fast. When we experience adversity, the need for situational awareness is positively correlated with the difficulty of obtaining it. The more intense the adversity, the more automatic and engrossing the narrowing process becomes. However, the presence of adversity is also an indicator of environmental wickedness (i.e., fraught uncertainty),[60] thus the heightened need for situational awareness. In other words, the more we need situational awareness, the harder it is to gain and maintain it. Adversity triggers protective psychological processes such as cognitive narrowing and meaning making. These processes are neither inherently adaptive nor maladaptive, but merely a method of cognitive resource management. The efficacy of these processes depends on other variables in the system (e.g., individual, social, and environmental characteristics). However, the more aversive the feeling (the stronger the dissonance), the stricter the protection (e.g., the more

HSOE professionals need to cultivate three critical skills related to the effective deployment of coping tactics (i.e., self-regulatory methods) after experiencing adversity to adaptively manage the meaning-making process.

The first skill is context sensitivity (i.e., situational awareness)
Situational awareness is knowing and understanding what is occurring in the environment and being able to identify emerging patterns, changes, and anomalies; distinguish between what is important versus unimportant; and recognize how and to what degree people, places, and things are interconnected within the situation so that when adversity occurs the most appropriate response can be initiated.

Leaders can assist individuals with maintaining situational awareness by:
- Continuously emphasizing the importance of situational awareness
- Prioritizing attention (reduce cognitive load by filtering information and requirements)
- Encouraging a "stay in the moment" mindset (avoid rumination about adversity that has occurred in the past or could occur in the future and not get fixed on any one detail)
- Promote the basics of health and fitness (sleep, nutrition, exercise, purpose, and social support)

The second skill is the development of a robust and diverse repertoire of coping tactics (coping kitbag).
A coping tactic is a specific method for managing meaning making in response to adversity (e.g., reframing an adverse situation as a challenge versus a threat, suppressing versus reframing emotions). A coping kitbag is the set of coping tactics one has at one's disposal (tactics), knows why and when to use them (techniques) and how to effectively deploy each tactic (procedures). Possessing a robust and diverse coping kitbag increases the odds that the right set of coping tactics are properly matched to the adversity being experienced within the situation-at-large. Knowing about, feeling comfortable using, and being able to match different coping tactics to different situations is critical to adaptive meaning making after adversity.

Leaders can assist individuals to develop a coping kitbag by:
- Knowing and understanding the various tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) individuals may use to cope with adversity
- Introducing, exposing, and educating individuals about the different coping TTPs
- Encouraging the use of and experimentation with different combinations of coping TTPs in different situations during training events
- Assisting individuals to reflect on and note the effectiveness of different coping TTPs in different situations during training events

The third skill is the ability to appropriately respond to feedback from the situation pertaining to the effectiveness of the coping tactics being used (coping adjustment).
Coping adjustment is monitoring and analyzing the interaction between the coping tactics deployed and the current situation, evaluating the effectiveness of the coping tactics being utilized, and, if appropriate, deploying different coping tactics that better match the situation. Because coping adjustment is the ability to sense the degree of effectiveness in which a coping tactic is working within the context of the current situation, it requires both solid situational awareness and a robust and diverse coping kitbag. To effectively adjust coping TTPs, a person must be able to effectively perceive, thoroughly comprehend (appropriately judge), and accurately predict what is occurring in the environment as well as possess numerous coping TTPs, feel comfortable using those coping TTPs, and be able to match different coping TTPs to different situations.

Leaders can assist individuals with adjusting coping TTPs in the following ways:
- Continuously emphasize situational awareness (prioritizing attention and encouraging a "stay in the moment" mindset)
- Spur the use of and experimentation with shifting coping TTPs in different situations during training events
- Assist individuals to reflect and note the ease/difficulty and effectiveness of shifting coping TTPs in different situations during training events
- Continuously set goals related to regulatory flexibility, meaning making, and adaptive adjustment after adversity
- Inspire a growth (versus fixed) mindset pertaining to the learning, development, and use of coping TTPs
- Encourage a "fail quickly" mentality when experimenting with different coping TTPs
- Incorporate different types of adversity during training and habitualize the inclusion of coping TTPs during meaning making after adversity in the after-action review process

FIGURE 9.2. Tips and Tools for Leaders and HSOE Professionals

constrictive the cognitive narrowing, the more encompassing the meaning making); and the more stringent the cognitive reaction, the more difficult it is to intervene in/influence these processes.

To see and address both the adversity and the situation-as-a-whole, we must broaden our perspective and experience the situation as ourselves, but through a larger aperture. Again, this is analogous to marksmanship. When aiming at a target, it is a natural tendency to close one eye and squint the other while looking through the sight. This is the mind's automatic way of using the body to enhance focus/narrow attention. By doing this we are limiting our field of vision. We can clearly see the target but not much else. To overcome this narrowing of focus, we train ourselves to keep both eyes open while aiming. This improves our ability to efficiently scan for and engage the targets located throughout our sector of fire. Overriding this natural tendency requires deliberate effort. In the same way, we need to train ourselves to maintain a broad perspective while simultaneously addressing the adversity. One way to do this is through the manipulation of *psychological distance*.

Psychological Distance and Construal-Level Theory

In HSOEs, the concept of psychological distance is peculiar, and guidance is often conflicting. On one hand, you'll hear how important it is to "pay attention to detail" because the "devil is in the details" and "it's the little things that matter." But you are just as likely to hear the opposite: "don't get lost in the weeds," "take a step back," and "see the big picture." When it comes to HSOEs, both types of advice are sound. There are times when it is necessary to quell all distractions and focus on one thing, and there are other times when becoming completely immersed in one event is detrimental. It's not that zooming in is bad and zooming out is good (or vice versa); it's a matter of knowing when to give something our undivided attention and when to attend to a broader spectrum of events. Moreover, along with knowing when to dedicate our attention, we also need to know how to shift the degree of focus based on the needs of the situation. Ideally, we want to strike a balance and be able to attend to the immediately important events while simultaneously being aware of the situation-as-a-whole.

Psychological distance is the subjective experience of how close or far away something is from the self. According to Trope and Liberman's Construal Level theory,[61] the farther away something is, or appears to be, the more we tend to think about, interpret, or construe it in the abstract. In other words, the level of construal (high = abstract, low = concrete) influences how a situation is psychologically represented and what characteristics of the situation are salient. The closer something is to us, the more we become psychologically immersed in it. We pay more attention to the specific details of that situation and emphasize superficial, contextual features; the small, ephemeral things matter. Conversely, the farther away something is, the more abstract it is to us. We are less aware of features that can sway from situation to situation and pay more attention to essential or core features.

Abstract, or *high-level construals*, preserve the absolute and invariant properties of a situation, while concrete, or *low-level construals*, emphasize its minute and peripheral details. A psychologically distant perspective allows us to see the big picture and perceive the gist of the situation-as-a-whole, whereas a psychologically close, or immersed perspective zeros us in on the specific, context-dependent details.[62]

Concrete and abstract construals are both productive and problematic. On one hand, low-level construals are great when attention to detail and/or emotional connectedness are important. Low-level construals help us to focus on the "how" of something—the mechanistic details. For example, when observing two soldiers conducting combatives (hand-to-hand combat training), a low-level construal would emphasize things like what the soldiers are wearing (physical fitness versus duty uniform), the technique being executed (a rear naked choke versus an arm bar), and how many minutes the two have been grappling. It's being intimate with the situation. Along with concreteness, the closer we are psychologically to something, the more likely we are to process it cognitively "hot" (versus cool).[63] *Hot cognition* is fast, emotional, and impulsive, whereas *cool cognition* is slow, contemplative, and reflective.[64] Hot cognition has been linked to a litany of cognitive biases and poor decision making.[65] Low-level construals are best for simple situations that require a high degree of attention to detail. For example, during an airborne operation, right before a jumper loads the aircraft, the jumpmaster (a highly trained and experienced paratrooper) inspects the jumper following a precise and highly technical procedure called Jumpmaster Personnel Inspection (JMPI). During JMPI, the jumpmaster painstakingly follows a rigorous procedure, examining in minute detail the parachute, the jumper, and every inch of where the parachute interacts with the jumper, looking for even the smallest discrepancy, or gig. There is nothing else the jumpmaster is paying attention to at that moment. All his/her focus is on JMPI. Even the smallest, most minute lapse in focus could result in missing a tiny, albeit critical detail such as a misrouted strap, an incorrect knot, or a misplaced object that could interfere with the proper functioning of the parachute. During JMPI and other similar premission checks or inspections (PCC/PCIs) in HSOEs, there is no need for anything but the most concrete construals.

The problem with low-level construals is they make us myopic, or nearsighted. When immersed in a situation, we are emotionally invested in it and are unable to clearly see things that are farther away. Low-level construals are inappropriate for situations that require complex decision making, broad understanding, and/or emotional detachment. Unlike low-level construals, high-level construals focus on the why of a situation. Going back to the combatives example, a high-level construal would emphasize the essence of the event. These soldiers are preparing for close quarters combat, improving their fitness, and enhancing their own personal readiness as well as the readiness of the unit. Moreover, construing a situation in this fashion is related to cool cognition, which promotes the reasoned, rational processing of information. However, just as low-level construals make us prone to myopia, high-level construals open us up to the opposite condition, hyperopia

(i.e., farsightedness), the inability to see things up close. Additionally, high-level construals can make us aloof (emotionally distant, removed, unavailable), which is adaptive under some circumstances but unproductive in others.[66]

Take, for example, a brigade-level rock-drill (i.e., the dress rehearsal for a complex operation by a large, multiunit military organization). Here, it is more important for participants, particularly the commander, to see the battlefield-as-a-whole as opposed to seeing any small detail of the operation. Synchrony and shared knowledge between units throughout the conduct of the operation are paramount. Understanding what each subordinate unit is doing as the main effort is crossing phase line Yankees is more critical then knowing how A Team, 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, A Co, 1-1 Infantry is going to enter Building 3 on objective Green. Unlike JMPI, focusing on minutiae is detrimental here. It is much more important for the commander to stay above the details and see the entire operation unfolding. With a high-level construal of the rehearsal, the commander can stay focused on the overall mission, ensure the brigade is supporting the intent of its higher headquarters, track broad themes, envision potential problems with interunit coordination, and, importantly, conduct second- and third-order contingency planning. Again, it's not that either level of construal (high, abstract; low, concrete) is better or worse than the other, but rather that the ability to adapt is dependent on the situation. Applying construal level theory to our model of meaning making, adjustment after adversity, and regulatory flexibility in the context of HSOEs, we deduce that knowing when to flexibly switch between the levels of construal based on the situation is a key component of adaptive meaning making and adjustment after adversity. However, knowing when to be flexible is not enough; we also need to know how to manipulate psychological distance.

Psychological Distance from the Self

When we think about manipulating psychological distance from something, the first method that comes to mind is to physically move closer or farther away from it. By increasing or decreasing physical distance we are simultaneously increasing or decreasing psychological distance. The problem with adversity is that it doesn't exclusively occur in physical space. When you are dealing with an emotionally significant, stress-producing event such as hardship, loss, or trauma it is impossible to physically move closer to or farther away from it. You are not a spectator when experiencing adversity, you are living/have lived the event, and it is happening/has happened to you. There is no physical space between you and the event.

When it comes to our own experiences, our default way of interpreting and processing information is through a *first-person perspective*.[67] As we move through our lives, we are creating and developing our mental models/schemas by experiencing and reasoning about the situations we encounter firsthand, through an *egocentric* or *self-immersed perspective*.[68] Most of the time this perspective is adaptive, as it allows us to accurately situate ourselves

within our environment and respond efficiently to it. However, at times the first-person perspective can be problematic. Trying to derive meaning from an adverse event from a self-immersed perspective can crystalize, augment, and even perpetuate the negative and damaging emotions associated with the event.[69] Conversely, employing a *self-distanced perspective* while thinking about an adverse event can lead to adaptive meaning making and adjustment.[70]

Self-distancing appears especially critical when we're dealing with intensely negative, self-relevant experiences like adversity because it is particularly influential to meaning making.[71] When we experience adversity, our mental models are challenged (i.e., we experience cognitive dissonance), and when our mental models are challenged, our minds automatically attempt to make meaning (reestablish cognitive equilibrium by integrating the adversity into our self-relevant mental models). When we make meaning of adversity through a self-immersed (first-person) perspective, we feel the same strong negative emotions that we originally experienced. Feeling those same emotions while attempting to reason through the adversity can highjack the process of meaning making and lead to harmful rumination. Conversely, when we self-distance, the psychological space created between the reasoning and experiencing selves reconstrues the event less concretely/more abstractly, which subsequently dampens the hot emotion while bolstering cool reason. Moreover, unlike other self-regulatory tactics that focus on *perspective shifting* (e.g., *mindfulness* and *empathetic perspective taking*),[72] self-distancing (a) is relatively effortless (versus mindfulness, which requires a significant amount of training and practice);[73] (b) allows us to experience the situations as ourselves (rather than in *someone else's shoes* as is the case with perspective taking),[74] leveraging all our valuable insight and idiosyncratic knowledge albeit through a cooler, more abstract, reasoned process;[75] and, unlike other tactics (e.g., mindfulness), can (c) be effectively deployed in the heat of the moment,[76] which is important in the fast-moving, critical, and attention-dividing context of HSOEs.

Along with these comparative benefits between self-distancing and other similar methods of self-regulation, researchers have uncovered a few different ways in which a person can effectively shift his/her perspective from a less egocentric/self-immersed (first-person) perspective to a more *allocentric*/self-distanced (*non-first-person*) perspective.

Methods for Self-Distancing

Adopting a non-first-person (e.g., second- or third-person) perspective during introspection facilitates psychological distance from the self (i.e., to separate the reasoning and experiencing selves).[77] For example, in their first study comparing the effects of a self-distanced versus self-immersed perspective on meaning making, Kross and colleagues asked a group of people to think about a recent adverse event they had experienced. They asked half of the participants to "take a few steps back and move away from your experience"

and the other half to "go back in time and place of the experience and relive the situation as if it were happening to you all over again."[78] This visual self-distance method effectively reduces hot emotional reactivity, enhanced wise (rational) reasoning (e.g., intellectual humility, dialectical thinking, and the ability to recognize and integrate self-protective and cooperative motives),[79] and decreased antisocial behavior through reconstruing how one thought about an adverse situation (more broad/less narrow).[80] Based on these results, we could predict that, after experiencing a fellow police officer being assaulted and injured while responding to a 911 call, reliving the event from a first-person/self-immersed perspective would likely lead to a rekindling or inflammation of felt guilt, anger, and revenge and would likely promote impromptu, reactive behavior. If one were to take a step back and think about the event from a non-first-person/self-distanced perspective, we could expect to see less emotional reactivity, more reasoned, objective thinking, and rational, strategic behavior.

The simulated manipulation of time is another method that has been shown to be effective in enhancing meaning making through self-distancing. Here, the goal is to shift from a present (immersed) to a future (distanced) self-perspective during introspection (*temporal self-distancing*). A series of experiments showed that prompting people to think about an adverse event as if looking back from ten years in the future (versus in the present) both increased beliefs about the temporariness of the adversity and reduced feelings of stress.[81] Moreover, in addition to demonstrating a causal (experimental) link between temporal self-distancing and emotional reactivity, the researchers observed a positive correlation between trait temporal self-distancing (the tendency to appraise negative events from a temporally broad/self-distanced versus narrow/self-immersed perspective) and higher satisfaction with life, optimism, and positive affect; and a negative association with depression, anger, and negative affect.[82] Sowden and colleagues extended this line of research to HSOEs.[83] Their results showed a positive relationship between trait temporal self-distancing and leadership performance during a month-long capstone evaluation exercise for future officers in the U.S. Army suggesting a link between trait temporal self-distancing and wise reasoning, particularly in appraising difficulty as challenge versus threat.[84]

In addition to demonstrating how the mental manipulation of space (visual self-distancing) and time (temporal self-distancing) promotes adaptive meaning making through self-distancing, researchers have also begun to test how manipulating another theoretically related medium—*self-referential language*—similarly influences self-regulation during introspection. The language we use both reflects and shapes how we think and feel.[85] In this vein, research has revealed that the language people use to refer to the self (e.g., first-person pronouns like "I" and "me" versus second-person pronouns like "you" and "his/her" and/or their own name in the third person) influences their self-perspective (immersed versus distanced) and impacts how they think, feel, and behave.[86]

Several experiments have leveraged the relationship between self-referential language and self-perspective by having participants think about adversity while adopting a self-distanced perspective by using non-first-person pronouns (e.g., "you" and "he/she") and/or their own name (e.g., "Walt") instead of first-person singular pronouns when referring to themselves while meaning making.[87] These linguistic shifts have emerged as effortless, immediate, and expedient ways to promote a self-distanced perspective.[88] There are at least two ways people can self-distance through shifting their self-referential language during introspection: the generic use of "you" (generic-you)[89] and the use of non-first-person self-referential language (distanced self-talk).[90]

Generic-you is a ubiquitous linguistic mechanism that people use to express general (timeless and context-transcendent) rules and norms. Generic-you has been shown to help people broaden their perspective, generalize their encounters, and derive meaning from a wide range of experiences, including adversity.[91] Generic-you refers to people in general (e.g., "you win some, you lose some"), and using it inspires self-distance during meaning making.[92] Generic-you is a linguistic indicator of spontaneous self-distancing (the tendency to recall negative events from a self-distanced versus self-immersed perspective), which has been found to be related to decreased emotional reactivity, increased problem-focused reasoning, and less reciprocation of negativity during interpersonal conflict.[93] Moreover, experimentally manipulating generic-you (instructing participants to think about an adverse event using "you" or "your" instead of "I" or "me") during meaning making has been shown to increase self-distance.[94] Use of generic-you as a coping tactic in HSOEs is typified by a quote from a drone pilot who was asked how he coped with the thought of killing via a computer monitor from afar: "*You* start to do these psychological gymnastics to make it easier to do what *you* have to do."[95]

Distanced Self-Talk

Distanced self-talk involves reflecting on the self from an outside perspective using one's own name and/or non-first-person pronouns during introspection. Self-distancing through distanced self-talk is an effortless, effective, self-induced, and versatile manipulation that is well suited for adaptive meaning making after adversity in HSOEs. The process is simple: while thinking about a negative, stress-producing, and/or adverse event, a person replaces first-person pronouns with their own name and/or other non-first-person pronouns. For example, instead of thinking, "Why did I experience that event and what does it mean for me?" you say, "Why did Walt experience that event and what does it mean for him?" This simple linguistic shift facilitates self-distance, which promotes the reframing of the event from a broader, more abstract perspective versus reliving the event from the same painful, self-immersed perspective, which in turn degrades hot, emotional reactiveness and promotes cool, reasoned reflection.

Distanced self-talk is particularly effective in reducing the emotional salience of intensely adverse situations and highly stressful "on-line" (i.e., in the moment)

experiences.[96] In other words, distanced self-talk is not only easy to do, it is also effective in reducing the emotional response to negative events both during meaning making (introspective reflection after the experience) and in real time (during the experience). Moreover, in addition to being effective for optimizing meaning making, distanced self-talk has also been shown to be effective in boosting wise reasoning during emotionally intense situations. For example, in their first set of experiments investigating the effects of distanced self-talk, Kross and colleagues showed that people who used distanced self-talk when thinking about a potentially stressful event were more likely to appraise the event as challenging (an indication of cool, reasoned reflection) than as threatening (an indication of hot, affective reaction) and reported less stress than people who used immersed self-talk.[97] This initial research examining the efficacy of distanced self-talk in reducing emotional reactivity during meaning making has not only been replicated and generalized to different populations, contexts, and stressors,[98] it has also been extended to the domain of judgment and decision making (JDM), particularly wisdom and morality, two critically important facets of JDM that have been linked to adversity, meaning making, and adjustment in HSOEs.[99]

Wisdom involves pragmatic reasoning that optimizes one's ability to navigate the trials and tribulations of human social life (e.g., appreciation for broad/long-term consequences, interdependence, sensitivity to social dynamics, intellectual humility, and the search to integrate diverse points of view).[100] The philosopher Adam Smith believed the ability to examine one's feelings and behavior from an outsider's perspective to be essential to wise, objective reasoning, self-regulation, and virtuous character,[101] all of which are critical to HSOs. Researchers who study self-distancing attempted to test Smith's hypothesis by examining the relationship between self-perspective and wise reasoning. Grossmann and colleagues found that when participants engaged in a simulated public goods dilemma (a situation where individual outcomes are yoked to the social decision making of everyone in the group),[102] those who used distanced self-talk when deliberating about whether and to what degree to contribute to the group were less likely to be influenced by time (longer deliberation decreased amount contributed to the group) and more likely to construe the situation as a broader, more socially interdependent dilemma than those who deliberated using immersed self-talk.[103] This basic relationship between distanced self-talk and wise reasoning through situational perspective broadening has been replicated in a month-long daily diary study;[104] in the context of goal pursuit;[105] in reducing irrational fear through increased objective reasoning during an emergency;[106] and in increasing post-traumatic growth (versus stress) after adversity by promoting positive emotional change.[107] All of these replications matter in the context of HSOEs.

Most recently, the relationship between distanced self-talk and JDM has been extended to the moral domain. Strong interpersonal ties typified by trust, respect, and loyalty are critical to task accomplishment in HSOEs.[108] However, as necessary as group

cohesion is to HSOs, there is a dark side to strong interpersonal relationships.[109] Research has shown that people are less likely to be whistleblowers (i.e., report wrongdoing to a third party) when they have a close personal relationship with the person who committed the unethical act.[110] Sowden and colleagues tested the hypothetical relationship between distanced self-talk and moral JDM in the context of whistleblowing (i.e., loyalty) dilemmas and found that distanced self-talk increased the likelihood of whistleblowing when close others committed severe moral infractions (e.g., credit card fraud versus downloading music illegally). Further efforts to understand this relationship have revealed that distanced self-talk not only enhances wise reasoning through increased self-distance, it also inspires abstraction of the self-concept, reduction of social identity salience, and increased rational self-interest,[111] all of which should promote prudent judgment and ethical decision making in HSOEs, where strong group cohesion and interpersonal relationships are important but nevertheless prone to social-cognitive bias.[112] This inquiry is doubly important in the context of HSOEs, because it is considered unethical both to behave dishonestly and to "turn a blind eye" when a colleague has behaved dishonestly, as typified by the Cadet Honor Code at the U.S. Military Academy, which states that "a cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." Thus, it is possible that along with promoting wise, unbiased reasoning, self-distancing also could help prevent the trauma and associated stress caused by the guilt, shame, and remorse felt by failing to act in accordance with one's moral standards that has become more and more prevalent for those serving in HSOs (i.e., moral injury).[113]

The research discussed here pertaining to distanced self-talk and self-distancing more generally should not be taken as a panacea for adaptive meaning making. Although promising, this research is in its infancy. By no means are we arguing that self-distancing, or any regulatory strategy for that matter, is a completely effective, robust method for avoiding harmful outcomes associated with meaning making or adversity. Nor are we implying that self-distancing is a viable replacement for other proven tactics like professional therapy and more traditional, well-established and/or vetted interventions. Rather, our goal here is to prop up self-distancing as an exemplar coping tactic that individuals working in HSOEs can include in their coping kitbag and use when attempting to make meaning of adversity. We also emphasize that nearly all the research discussed and summarized here pertaining to self-distancing was conducted in non-HSOE contexts with non-HSO samples. This clarifier is important as research has repeatedly demonstrated distinct differences between military and nonmilitary populations and has shown that these differences play an important role in the relationships between variables related to health, wellness, and performance.[114] However, even considering these caveats, our hope is that HSO professionals and leaders will find self-distancing a useful tactic for optimizing meaning making after adversity. Figure 9.3 shows tips and tools for using self-distancing coping.

A prototypical coping tactic for facilitating meaning making in HSOEs is self-distancing.
Self-distancing is a coping tactic that promotes abstract, context-agnostic, rational thinking while abating concrete, context-dependent emotion reactivity through the creation of psychological distance between the experiencing of an adverse event and the reasoning about the adverse event (Tactic – what).
Self-distancing is best deployed in situations that require less attention to detail (e.g., JMPI) and/or emotional connection (e.g., one-on-one, communal relationships) and more of a broadly construed, big picture perspective (e.g., brigade-level rock-drill) and/or wise, pragmatic, ethical reasoning (e.g., whistleblowing), all of which are applicable to HSOEs. Furthermore, unlike other coping tactics that focus on perspective shifting like mindfulness and empathetic perspective talking, self-distancing is relatively effortless, maintains self-relevant knowledge, and can be deployed on-line (i.e., in the heat of the moment) (Technique – why).
Self-distancing is best deployed at the onset of adversity (to counter cognitive narrowing) and while introspecting during meaning making in response to adversity (to avoid reliving the adversity from a self-immersed perspective and promote the thoughtful examination of the adversity from a self-detached perspective (Technique – when).
There are a few different methods that foster self-distancing (e.g., spatial, and temporal perspective shifting and the use of generic-you). One of easiest and most effective of these is the use of distanced self-talk. Distanced self-talk occurs when a person uses his or her own name (e.g., "Walt") or non-first-person pronouns (e.g., "you" and "he/she") while thinking about a situation. This contrasts with the use of first-person pronouns (e.g., "I" and "me"), which is the default or most typical way people refer to themselves while thinking (immersed self-talk). When thinking about an adverse situation instead of thinking "why did this happen to me and what am I going to do about it?" say, "why did this happen to [say your first name], and what is he/she going to do about it?" This simple linguistic shift should help to reduce the emotional response while bolstering rational reasoning (Procedure – how).
Leaders in HROEs are critically important to meaning making. **Leaders can both help and hinder meaning making for an individual.**
To help (versus hinder), leaders should assist individual with developing self-distancing TTPs during meaning making by: • Leading by example—along with inspiring behavior through modeling, leader self-distancing might make leaders better mentors. Self-distancing reduces self-referential processing, which makes it easier to counsel across identity group boundaries, build rapport, and increase interpersonal resonance • Establishing/cultivating a team/organizational climate and culture that promotes openness/learning, experimentation, and self-regulation • Coaching (versus instructing/managing) by guiding individuals as they work through the process on their own versus telling them how to do it • Walking the line between being empathetic (listening and hearing) and providing productive support (offering advice) • Actively developing and tailoring self-distancing techniques (why and when) and procedures (how) for the individual • Encouraging experimentation with self-distancing in response to adversity during training • Providing feedback to individuals as they deploy self-distancing as a coping tactic during meaning making. • Paying particular attention to its effectiveness in reducing emotional reactivity/boosting wise reasoning, optimizing meaning making, and promoting thriving after adversity

FIGURE 9.3. Self-Distancing Coping Tactic for Meaning Making

CONCLUSION

Due to the high levels of dynamism, demand, and danger that define high-risk, service-oriented occupational environments (HSOEs), military personnel, law enforcement officers, and first responders (HSO professionals) are prone to experience adversity in the form of emotionally significant, stress-producing events such as hardship, loss, and trauma. The human mind responds to adversity by automatically integrating the experience into its

understanding of the world and everything in it. Although integral to the adjustment-after-adversity process, this mechanism, otherwise known as meaning making, is not always adaptive.

Several factors influence the relationship between meaning making and adjustment after adversity (thriving versus suffering). This chapter focused on the facilitation of meaning making. To do this, we mapped the theory of regulatory flexibility, a relevant and empirically supported scientific model of self-regulation (self-control, emotion regulation, and coping), onto the adjustment-after-adversity process in the context of HSOEs. The theory of regulatory flexibility posits that to optimize self-regulation a person needs to (a) know when the situation requires self-regulation, (b) have a variety of self-regulatory strategies at his/her disposal, and (c) know when and how to use each self-regulatory strategy. We identified three skills that HSO professionals should cultivate to optimize meaning making after adversity: (1) the ability to maintain situational awareness, (2) the ability to develop a coping tactics kitbag, and (3) the ability to adjust coping tactics based on the situation. At the heart of our model is the idea that individuals need to develop a stable of coping tactics that can be flexibly deployed as the situation dictates. With this in mind, we introduced a promising, prototypical coping tactic—self-distancing—that HSO professionals can use to optimize meaning making in response to adversity.

We hope that the HSO professionals and leaders who read this chapter have gained an appreciation for the inner workings of meaning making after adversity, particularly as it unfolds in the context of adversity in HSOEs, and have also learned about an evidence-based method to optimize meaning making after adversity in HSOEs. Finally, we hope they have gained a new tactic for their coping kitbag that they can easily and effectively employ to leverage the meaning-making process to increase thriving/decrease suffering when dealing with adversity in HSOEs.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Individuals and leaders should actively and mindfully versus passively and mindlessly manage the *meaning making after adversity* process.
2. HSOE professionals need to cultivate three critical skills related to the effective deployment of *coping tactics* in the adaptive management of the meaning-making process after experiencing adversity. Those skills are developing:
   a. *situational awareness*
   b. a *coping kitbag*
   c. the ability to *adjust coping*
3. *Self-distancing* is a prototypical coping tactic that individuals and leaders can use to facilitate adaptive meaning making after adversity in HSOEs.

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SECTION TWO

INFLUENCING WHEN PEOPLE ARE IN HARM'S WAY

CHAPTER 10

Trust

The Key to Leading When Lives Are on the Line

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The Sniper Mission

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) was called in to assist the Memphis FBI Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team to apprehend a married couple wanted on drug trafficking charges. The fugitive couple and an adult son, all with criminal records, were believed to be living in trailers in a rural mountain valley where outsiders would be easily noticed. The fugitives were known to stockpile weapons and had vowed never to be taken alive by law enforcement; thus the FBI considered them armed and extremely dangerous.

Two HRT snipers accompanied two SWAT snipers with the mission to positively identify the fugitives and provide security and containment for the assault force. To accomplish this mission, the snipers had to move several kilometers through wooded, mountainous terrain, at night, using night vision goggles (NVGs).

The HRT leader and his partner, nicknamed Felix, had gone through HRT selection and served together all over the world, and had complete trust in each other. They had never met the two SWAT snipers. The HRT leader, being familiar with SWAT training, believed that the SWAT snipers were expert marksman who would be highly effective once they reached the objective, but they lacked training in extended overland movement under NVGs. As a consequence, the HRT leader created two sniper teams, each consisting of an HRT and a SWAT sniper, to mitigate the SWAT snipers' lack of NVG training and to promote teamwork.

The HRT leader realized that he needed to quickly earn the trust of the SWAT snipers because a hesitation in following directives during a mission could affect mission success and the safety of the team. The leader asked Felix to train the SWAT snipers on the use of NVGs and give them a detailed mission brief to demonstrate the competence

of the HRT members. The HRT leader encouraged the SWAT snipers to ask questions and offer suggestions on the mission.

The HRT leader's concept of the operation was to move by vehicle along the ridgeline above the valley where the fugitives lived and then proceed down the mountain to the fugitives' trailers on foot. Once at the objective, HRT/SWAT sniper teams would move to separate positions, with one moving across the road, to provide a 360-degree view of the objective area. Once the fugitives were positively identified, the HRT leader would notify the assault team and the snipers would provide security and containment.

The HRT pushed out from their staging area at midnight in a tremendous lightning storm that reduced visibility to just a few meters. The heavy rain made travel on the dirt trail leading to the ridge slow and hazardous. Several hundred meters from the top of the draw, the vehicle slid off the road into a swollen creek. The HRT leader gathered the men and equipment, issued a change to the plan, and got the team moving toward the draw. The leader placed Felix in the lead because he trusted his ability to navigate and control movement. The HRT leader traveled third in the file, followed by his SWAT partner in the fourth position to provide rear security. Movement was very slow due to limited NVG visibility caused by the heavy rain.

At the top of the draw, the team descended the heavily wooded slope and NVG visibility deteriorated to only a few feet. The team's NVG visibility completely washed out during the lightning flashes. NVG movement under these conditions challenged the experienced HRT snipers and made it extremely difficult for the less experienced SWAT snipers. The trees were so thick and visibility so low that Felix's SWAT partner had to place his hand on Felix's backpack so he did not lose his way.

The HRT reached their objective rally point as the storm was still raging. The leader sent Felix and his SWAT partner forward to conduct a reconnaissance of the objective and movement routes to final positions. They returned twice because flooding and deadfall along the route prevented them from completing the reconnaissance. The team leader gave the SWAT snipers the mission to monitor the satellite radio and provide security while he and Felix moved forward to locate the objective. After locating the objective, Felix and the leader moved back and linked up with the SWAT snipers just as it was starting to get light.

The team leader realized that it was not possible to move the sniper teams into the planned positions because the flooding and sunrise greatly increased the chances of compromise. The leader had to quickly change the plan. Felix and his partner would move to the right side of the objective to provide cover and containment, and the leader and his partner would move to the rear of the objective to identify the fugitives. The new positions required the team members to assume additional risk because they were closer to the fugitives' trailers. The leader's trust in his SWAT partner's training was upheld when the SWAT sniper built a good concealed position and set up effective

observation of the target, allowing the leader to focus on making possible changes to the plan and reporting to the operation center.

The dawn revealed a dismal rainy day. The only bright spot came when the sniper team leader was notified that a remote operations unit had a drone on station to assist the team in identifying the fugitives. The fugitives left their trailers after daybreak to relieve themselves. After three hours of intense observation and with digital systems information provided by the drone operator, the team was able to make positive identification on all three fugitives. The command post was notified, and the assault team started maneuvering toward the objective.

The assault phase was a tense and critical part of the HRT mission because the team had to keep the assault element informed on location and activities of fugitives and stay ready to act if the assault element was compromised. The assault element stealthily moved their vehicles to the top of the drive leading into the property. Prior to initiating the assault, the assault team leader directed the remote operations unit to initiate communications blackout on the trailers. The assault team swept down onto the objective while the HRT and SWAT snipers provided security. The fugitives were taken by surprise and tried to run but were quickly apprehended by the well-trained agents. The search of the trailers revealed assault rifles stacked by the doors. Because of the well-planned and -executed mission these fugitives never had the opportunity for a last stand.

IN THIS CHAPTER WE DEFINE TRUST, outline informal ways to assess trust, introduce an evidence-based trust development model, explore how leaders can leverage each component of this model to enhance trust in a range of dangerous contexts, and conclude with key insights.

TRUST AND LEADERSHIP

The sniper scenario highlights the important link between group members' trust in their leader and the leader's ability to influence them to willingly risk their lives to achieve the team's mission. Here, trust means the willingness to assume vulnerability to actions of another group member (leader, follower, or peer) based on a sense of confidence that the group member will fulfill his or her role responsibilities, be honest, and act in accordance with the organization's core values.[1] For example, during the sniper mission, the team members' trust in the HRT leader allowed them to follow him without hesitation throughout the mission even when changes in the plan required them to assume additional risk. A study of soldiers serving in Iraq found that trust was necessary and essential for a leader to exercise influence in combat. Soldiers who trusted their leaders were more willing to follow directives and more motivated to perform duties to complete the mission.[2] This scenario and research suggest that trust is one of the key psychological mechanisms providing group members with a sense of security to assume the risks associated with

following leaders in dangerous contexts. Leadership is at its core a positive influence process, and group members' willingly accepting their leaders' influence thus represents true and impactful leadership, not mere compliance. In essence, trust is a foundation of effective leadership across almost every type of organization and circumstance.[3]

Trust can also be reciprocal. Leaders tend to give trusted group members more input in decisions and greater latitude to perform their duties.[4] For example, during the planning phase of the sniper mission, the HRT leader's trust in the SWAT members influenced him to seek their input. Similarly, group members who earn the trust of their peers possess a greater ability to exercise influence within the group. These trusted peers emerge as informal leaders who can significantly influence the morale, cohesion, and effectiveness of the group. Thus, to exercise influence within a group, one must first earn the trust of its members. Mutual trust between group members, especially leaders and subordinates, enhances mutual influence, which increases organizational effectiveness.[5]

Results from the study conducted in Iraq also found that soldiers who did not trust their leaders did not willingly follow their directives, questioned their orders, and complied with orders only after taking actions to assume the absolute minimum risk. The soldiers' lack of faith in distrusted leaders' directives and their increased motivation to protect their personal safety put unit members' lives and mission accomplishment at risk. As one artillery gunner succinctly stated, "If you cannot trust your leader, you are going to have doubts about your safety as well as the safety of your fellow soldiers. You will not perform 100 percent for your leader if there is not trust."[6] Thus, lack of trust in a leader prompts followers to divert attention and energy away from task completion, which is likely to diminish their task performance.

Trust is the social adhesive that bonds members and allows them to work cooperatively to achieve a higher purpose or mission. The bonds of trust among group members fuels a commitment to stay connected, protect and promote the welfare of group members (even at personal risk, including one's life), and fulfill the group's purpose and mission.[7] Trust is a foundation on which cohesion, cooperation, and collective performance in teams and organizations is built. To summarize, trust is important to leadership because it determines the amount of influence leaders exercise and creates reciprocal bonds that encourage people to work cooperatively to achieve a common purpose or mission. Trust is necessary and essential for the exercise of influence within a group.

THE IROC TRUST DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Trust develops through reciprocating cycles in which each person in the relationship acts in a cooperative and competent manner to reduce the other's anxiety or fear of exploitation and to reveal the potential rewards for staying in and contributing to the relationship. The mechanism that drives the trust cycle is a person's willingness to assume some degree of risk related to another person's actions. For instance, leaders who empower their followers with the freedom of action to do their jobs are assuming vulnerability through underwriting the

followers' potential failures, thus communicating to the group members the leader's trust in them. If the followers perform their duties in a competent and cooperative manner, thus upholding the leader's expectation of their ability to complete their duties without much supervision, the leader is more likely to assume a greater degree of vulnerability in the future. As the leader and group members repeatedly assume risk through dependence on one another and the choice is validated through results, the trust in the relationship deepens.[8]

To illustrate how to develop and sustain trust, we present the IROC (individual, relationship, organization, and context) trust development model. This model emerged from the results of several empirical studies conducted in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment with extreme risk. The model focuses on four factors that influence the development and sustainment of trust in relationships: individual credibility, relationship, organization, and context (see figure 10.1). The individual credibility factor addresses the knowledge, skills, abilities, character traits, and care leaders need to develop to effectively fulfill their leadership duties. The relationship factor touches on leader actions needed to create positive interpersonal relationships required to function in dangerous contexts. The organization factor considers how unit culture, policies, procedures, processes, practices, systems, and structure set a climate that impacts both the individual and the relationship factors of trust. Finally, the context factor focuses on how the environment can influence the nature of dependencies in relationships, members' psychological needs, and the organization's operation. Later sections of this chapter provide suggested practical applications to assist leaders in developing trust. The IROC model helps leaders to organize their thoughts about trust and provides them a systematic framework to create interventions to enhance trust, and is also a means to predict how events or behaviors might impact trust.[9] We provide more detail on each of the four IROC factors in the next few sections.

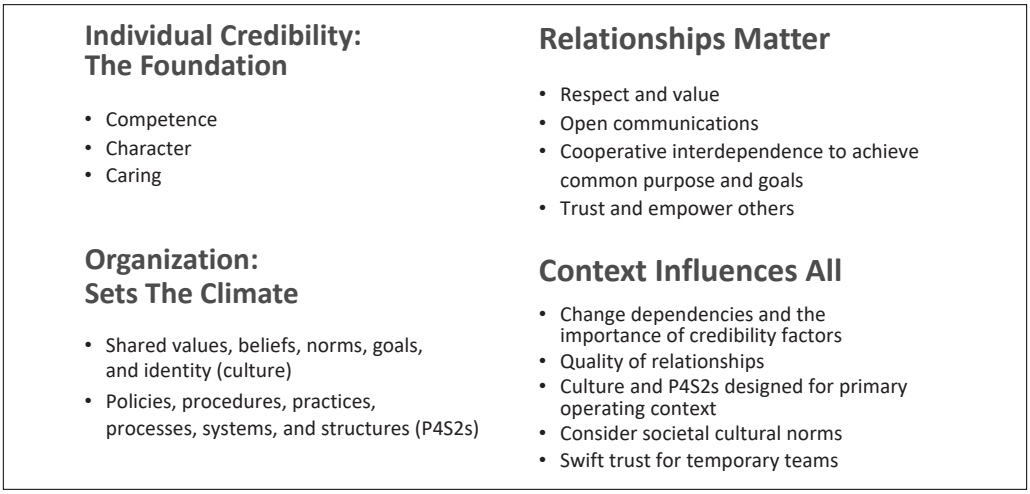
Individual Credibility: The Foundation
• Competence
• Character
• Caring
Relationships Matter
• Respect and value
• Open communications
• Cooperative interdependence to achieve common purpose and goals
• Trust and empower others
Organization: Sets The Climate
• Shared values, beliefs, norms, goals, and identity (culture)
• Policies, procedures, practices, processes, systems, and structures (P4S2s)
Context Influences All
• Change dependencies and the importance of credibility factors
• Quality of relationships
• Culture and P4S2s designed for primary operating context
• Consider societal cultural norms
• Swift trust for temporary teams

FIGURE 10.1. The IROC Trust Development Model
Adapted from Sweeney, Thompson, and Blanton (2009). "Trust and Influence in Combat: An Interdependence Model." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39 (1), 235–264.

Individual Credibility: The Foundation

Followers place their trust in leaders based on the stable characteristics that define who the leaders are as people. Team members want leaders who are highly competent, display good character, and care about individual members' and the group's well-being.[10] If group members can attribute leaders' competence, character, and caring to stable dispositional characteristics, then they will have confidence in the leader's ability to ensure the group's future success while at the same time protecting their welfare, which leads to trust. It is important that leaders possess these three attributes and that they find authentic ways for followers to recognize them through their actions.

Competence. In dangerous contexts, perceived leader competence is the dominant individual credibility attribute in the development of trust with group members because it plays a pivotal role in mission accomplishment and in protecting members' welfare.[11] Competence entails a leader's decision-making abilities, domain and organization knowledge, self-management, and people skills. Group members must believe the leader possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to accomplish the mission and protect their welfare.

The leader's primary function is to make decisions to ensure efficient use of resources to accomplish the unit's mission and to protect followers' welfare. Group members depend on their leaders' expertise and judgment to plan and execute operations that successfully complete the mission with the least possible risk to followers' lives. Thus, a dangerous-context leader must have the intellect and domain expertise—understanding the capabilities of equipment and people and how best to employ them—to plan operations to efficiently accomplish assigned missions while anticipating possible contingencies and adaptations. For instance, in the sniper scenario, the team leader demonstrated the capability to make quick adjustments to the movement plan when the insertion vehicle slid off the road prior to the designated insertion point.

One of the competencies unique to dangerous contexts is the leaders' self-management skills. Leaders' ability to manage stress and their emotions facilitates their ability to focus attention, process information, and make sound decisions in dynamic and dangerous situations. Equally important, leaders' composure under stress bolsters their followers' confidence that the group can handle the situation, which reduces group members' stress.[12] For instance, in the sniper scenario, the leader's ability to stay composed during a difficult night involving movement through a torrential rainstorm and terrain that required a change in plans helped keep the team composed, confident, and focused on the mission. In this same vein, leaders also amplify or attenuate the emotions of others within the team. They do this in part via role-modeling—team members emotionally take cues from leaders—but also by actively keeping team members' emotions in check. Leaders who fail to successfully manage their emotions in stressful situations tend to lose their followers' trust because their emotional reactions prevent the purposeful application of their competence when the team needs it the most.

Character. A leader's character entails strengths such as honesty in word and deed (integrity), physical and moral courage, sense of duty, perseverance, and resilience as outlined in chapter 2 of this book. Integrity is important for the development of trust because it provides followers with a sense of confidence that regardless of the situation, leaders will act in accordance with their and the organization's values and lead by example. Leaders should identify and take advantage of opportunities to communicate and model their values (e.g., explicitly relating their decision rationale to values). Leaders who act in accordance with their values serve as good role models and provide the organization with clear ethical boundaries within which to accomplish missions. In dangerous contexts, especially when deadly force must be used to accomplish the mission, these boundaries validate and protect group members' moral purpose and sustain their will to accomplish the mission. Furthermore, these ethical boundaries enhance team member empowerment because they know action taken that fits within these boundaries will be acceptable.

Honesty in communication builds credibility and trust while simultaneously enhancing group effectiveness. Followers undertake risky actions based on the information leaders provide, thus they demand honest and candid information about the purpose of the operation and the dangers inherent in it. Candid information creates an atmosphere of transparency, providing leaders and group members with an enhanced sense of security because it assists in reducing perceptions of hidden agendas and opens communication channels.

Open communications fulfill group members' psychological need for knowledge about a situation and the true purpose and desired end state of an operation (the why). Providing task *and* purpose reduces group members' uncertainty, allows them to assess feasibility and risk, and also gives them a reason why they must risk their lives.[13] Group members' understanding of the true purpose of an operation gives them a means to make meaning out of the trauma they might experience, which protects their mental health and fosters trust.[14] If they do not understand the purpose or think it is dubious, team members expect their leader to press a higher authority for clarification and/or a modification to the mission. Any indication that leaders are hiding the true purpose or desired end state of an operation decreases group members' level of trust in their leaders and their motivation to accomplish the mission. See chapter 14 for more information on how leaders communicate purpose.

Physical courage and moral courage are important elements in the character of dangerous-context leaders. Physical courage entails leaders perceiving risk, experiencing some level of fear, willingly sharing the danger with group members, and still performing their duties.[15] As highlighted in chapter 4, leaders' physical courage provides followers with a sense of confidence that no matter how dangerous the situation gets, the leaders will be with them performing their duties. It is important to note that while group members understand that leaders experience fear in dangerous contexts, they do not want them to show signs of fear.[16] "Leader courage is [important because] if you show your fear, no one

will want to follow you into a situation where you are putting your lives on the line," one infantry company fire support officer said.[17] Leaders behaving courageously role-model behaviors that demonstrate courage, serve as sources of strength, and also communicate a sense of confidence that the situation is not as bad as group members think and they will get through it.[18]

Moral courage is important for earning trust because it provides leaders the strength of will to do the right thing regardless of the situation and the cost they must incur. Put another way, moral courage is the willingness to incur risk in order to act in accordance with one's values and to uphold loyalty to followers and the unit by protecting their best interests. Leaders' willingness to confront headquarters to request modifications to a mission they feel puts their organizations at unnecessary risk is an example. Followers trust leaders with strong moral courage, knowing they will act with integrity and support the team in the most vulnerable situations, even at the leader's personal risk.

Perseverance and resilience are critical character traits for dangerous-context leaders (see chapter 7). Followers count on their leaders to have the strength of will and physical endurance to see a mission through, the ability to adjust their plans and actions to lead through adversity and unexpected challenges, and the openness to learn and grow from experience. Resilient leaders persevere and thus provide followers with a sense of confidence that no matter what they encounter during a mission, the leaders will adapt and ensure the mission's completion. In the opening vignette, the team leader made sound tactical judgments to account for unexpected factors such as flooding and approaching daylight. It would have been easy to succumb to those problems, but the leader made adjustments, bounced back, and continued the mission.

Once trust in a leader's character has been lost, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to regain.[19] Followers tend to see a leader's character as being relatively stable. Leaders who are dishonest, fail to take courageous action, violate the organization's core values, or breach agreements with followers will lose their trust.[20] The fact that character is an assessment of the person's essence makes it a prominent factor in building and maintaining credibility and trust in all relationships.

Caring. Care for followers is the second most important leader attribute that influences the development of trust in the dangerous context of combat. Soldiers believe that leaders who care about them will plan and execute missions with the least possible risk to their lives. Also, soldiers think that caring leaders will represent their needs and interests to higher authorities and fight to obtain necessary resources. This type of bond with leaders seems to provide group members with a sense of security because it helps address followers' concerns about their safety.[21]

This category of behavior embodies a leader's genuine concern for and desire to promote group members' well-being, even at a cost to themselves. Leaders' concern for group members' welfare forms the basis for building mutual cooperation in the leader-subordinate relationship that is essential for the establishment of trust.[22] Situations in

which leaders must sacrifice their own self-interests to promote the welfare of their followers test and demonstrate the depth of their care for group members. This sacrifice can be as simple as giving up a couple of hours on the weekend to visit a group member in the hospital or as complex as disobeying an unethical directive in combat to protect the welfare of subordinates. The key is that the leader willingly incurs some cost to protect or promote the welfare of those who serve in the unit.

Where leaders spend their time indicates what they care about. Leaders who invest time in supporting, getting to know, listening to, and developing their group members are communicating to followers that they are valued. Given the dangerous context, "caring" for followers may include demanding the best out of them so that they can survive the challenges they may face. Thus, one of the most powerful ways leaders can demonstrate care for group members is to train them well. Tough, realistic training to standard helps provide assurance that each individual and the group can accomplish assigned responsibilities.

Other small investments of time leaders can leverage to demonstrate they care include writing thank-you notes, conducting periodic counseling and mentoring sessions with members, publicly acknowledging and giving credit for group success to the members (versus to oneself), walking around and visiting members daily to get to know them, sending them to school for training even if it means a short-term loss to the organization, helping them solve problems, and assisting them when they leave the organization.

To summarize, group members determine whether to trust their leaders on the basis of competence, character, and caring. Therefore, leaders should continuously strive to acquire domain knowledge and improve decision-making skills, develop their integrity by making daily decisions based on personal and organizational values, communicate the rationale behind decisions, and demonstrate care by investing their most precious resource—time—in the people they lead. These behaviors are associated with authentic and transformational leadership (individual consideration and idealized influence), which are further discussed in chapter 13.[23]

Relationships Matter

An individual gains credibility based on competence, character, and caring, but trust develops within the context of a relationship. The quality of the relationship can either facilitate or hinder the development of trust. Respect, open and honest communication, shared purpose and goals, and a willingness to be dependent on (or vulnerable to) another person facilitate the development of trust.[24] This is especially true in leader-subordinate relationships because the characteristics of a high-quality relationship tend to reduce the perceived hierarchical power differential between the leader and team members, thus reducing fear and uncertainty and promoting cooperation.[25]

Mutual respect and value. Leaders' respect for followers rests in leaders' assumption that group members possess potential to enrich the unit. This view that all followers have

potential creates positive expectations within the leader, which prompts him or her to provide all members with opportunities to develop skills, spend time coaching all members, and engage in more frequent interactions, which result in better follower performance.[26] Leaders who respect their followers and view them as valued team members set the conditions for followers to reciprocate with respect. When leaders and group members respect and value each other, cooperation flourishes because it is in the best interests of all parties. Mutual concern and respect also facilitate open communications.

Open communications. Leaders start to establish a positive relationship with team members by clearly communicating their expectations of followers and giving followers the opportunity to reciprocate and communicate their expectations of leaders. Clarifying expectations reduces potential for future conflict and synchronizes members' efforts regarding responsibilities and priorities. Seeking subordinates' input on operations is the surest way to open communication channels. Leaders who seek follower input communicate respect for team members and trust in their competence, and show willingness to be vulnerable by showing they are open to others challenging their thinking and decisions.

Furthermore, to foster a climate of transparency, leaders should make an extra effort to share information about the organization's activities, upcoming requirements, rationale for decisions that affect the group, and changes in priorities and policies. Keeping group members informed gives them insights into leaders' intentions, prevents rumors, provides opportunities for feedback, and allows them to prepare for future operations. Thus, open communication facilitates the development of trust because it clarifies leaders' and members' goals and intentions, demonstrates respect, and gives members the opportunity to exercise potential upward influence on the leader's decisions and actions.

How leaders react to "bad news" can either enhance open communication and foster trust or totally shut down communication within the organization. Leaders should remain calm when they receive bad news, then focus their efforts on assisting followers in resolving the issue while not placing blame, offering coaching as necessary. In doing so leaders are creating a psychologically safe climate for followers to take prudent risk and engage in candid communication, regardless of the situation, which fosters a good relationship and trust. When leaders react negatively to bad news or focus on placing blame instead of resolving the issue, they are shaping an unsafe climate that hinders transparent communication and fosters fearful relationships, which hinders trust, and thereby empowerment and risk taking.[27]

Cooperative interdependence to achieve a common purpose and goals. Team members who understand that they must rely on each other to achieve a shared purpose and realize important goals are more likely to cooperate, which facilitates the development of trust. Teammates know that working together cooperatively is beneficial to the team and all members.[28] Leaders should create opportunities for their team to discuss each member's contribution to achieving the mission, how others depend on them, and how

the parent organization and external stakeholders depend on the team's contribution. Doing this dependency crosswalk increases members' motivation to perform well because they understand the importance of their contribution and do not want to let their teammates down. Furthermore, members' understanding of shared dependencies tends to enhance mutual influence within the group because everyone's outcomes are linked; thus teammates tend to be more open to ideas and suggestions from each other.[29] In a combat context, soldiers' desire to uphold fellow unit members' dependencies and maintain their status in the group are powerful motivating forces that encourage soldiers to face the dangers of combat and sustain them through the hardships of a combat tour.[30] Thus, sharing dependencies increases members' cooperation, performance motivation, and openness to influence, which contributes to the development of trust.

For dangerous-context leaders, the best means to demonstrate that they accept the dependence on group members is to share hardships and dangers with them. Leaders who willingly go into harm's way and place their safety in the hands of their teammates powerfully communicate their trust in the group and their shared interdependence. Group members depend on leaders to make good decisions to accomplish the mission while protecting their welfare. Leaders who are out front sharing the hardships and dangers have a greater understanding of the situational demands and the capabilities of the team and can make decisions to adapt to the dynamic nature of the situation. Furthermore, sharing hardships and dangers with team members communicates the leader's confidence in unit members' ability to complete the mission, and the leader's mutual dependence on followers.[31]

As an example of these points, in the sniper scenario above, the FBI SWAT snipers had to depend on the HRT leader to develop a plan to get them from the drop-off point to the overwatch positions safely and without compromise to achieve the common purpose of capturing the fugitive couple. The HRT leader had to depend on the SWAT snipers to provide security and perform the surveillance mission for the assault element. The team leader was out front sharing the dangers of moving in a lightning storm and the threat from the suspects at the objective. The willingness of the SWAT snipers and HRT leader to put their well-being in one another's hands demonstrated interdependence, which facilitated cooperative behavior and trust.

Willingness to trust and empower. To initiate the trust-building cycle with team members, leaders need to demonstrate their intention to trust their followers.[32] A simple way to empower followers is to give them the freedom to do their job without micromanaging them. Empowering the team to determine "how" to fulfill their responsibilities leverages the reciprocal nature of trust development. This begins with the leaders' assumptions that their team members are capable and motivated to do well. Leaders should encourage them to take initiative to solve problems on their own and should be willing to view reasonable mistakes as opportunities for development. Followers who demonstrate the ability to fulfill their responsibilities without close supervision earn their leaders' trust and gain

a greater latitude of empowerment and ability to influence their leaders. Leaders' trust in followers is essential to empowering them and allowing them to exercise influence.

A good empowering technique is to provide followers with mission-type directives that clearly state the purpose of the task regarding its impact on the organization; what tasks need to be done; and the desired effects of the tasks that need to be achieved in terms of time, space, terrain, and outcomes. Mission-type directives provide "what" and "why," then empower followers to determine "how" to accomplish an assigned task by providing them a broad, flexible decision-making framework within which to work and adapt to dynamic situations.[33] Also, group members' participation in decision making enhances their commitment to the decisions. Leaders will hear group members discuss decisions as "we have decided" or "our decision is" versus "the leader has decided." See chapter 14 for more information on empowering followers.

In the sniper scenario, the officer in charge gave the HRT team leader two missions: to positively identify the fugitives before initiating the assault, and to protect members of the assault team. In this situation, the sniper team leader was empowered to determine the best positions to accomplish the two missions, the movement plan, and the timetable. An understanding of the tasks (identify fugitives and provide cover and containment) and purposes (trigger to initiate assault and to protect assault members) provided the HRT team leader the flexibility to adjust positions when the team encountered flooding at the objective.

To summarize, the quality of the relationships leaders create with their followers is important in facilitating the development of trust. Therefore, dangerous-context leaders are wise to invest time in developing a quality relationship with each member of the team as well as key external stakeholders. Likewise, leaders of elements that provide support to units operating in dangerous context need to purposefully build relationships with operating units. As highlighted in the sniper scenario, FBI leaders had to know how to employ the supporting drone and have confidence the supporting unit would provide the necessary support when needed. Support element leaders can build relationships with operating unit leaders by providing training to key operational leaders, assigning a liaison officer to the supported unit, and regularly conducting joint unit training. Building quality relationships with operating units helps leaders of supporting and supported units build mutual trust.[34] Leaders should use authentic and transformational leadership behaviors to build quality relationships.[35] The results of a longitudinal study conducted in a military environment indicated that transformational leadership accelerated the development of trust over time.[36] See chapter 13 for more information on these styles of leadership.

Organization: Sets the Climate

Leaders should foster organizational behaviors and attributes that reinforce and support the building of credibility in all members and that foster cooperative relationships within the organization and with key external stakeholders.

Culture. The organization's culture consists of shared values and beliefs that influence members' perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behavior pertaining to the organization's purpose and mission; culture also encompasses mutual expectations, interactions both within and outside the organization, and the shared identity or ethos.[37] If these shared values and beliefs emphasize the importance of trust and teamwork, then all members are likely to behave in a manner that facilitates the development of trust between individuals, between teams, and with key external stakeholders. Culture also serves as a bonding agent to bring people together to strive to uphold common values and beliefs and to achieve a worthy purpose and mission.[38] Thus, the organization's culture has a powerful influence on members' expectations regarding others' behavior as well as their own. For example, in the sniper scenario, the HRT leader had never met the two SWAT snipers who were joining his team; however, being familiar with the culture and training of elite units such as SWAT, the leader reasonably believed he would find in the new members levels of competence, values, and teamwork similar to those of his own team.

Leaders might use a core ideology development or review process to assist members to collectively discover, define, or reaffirm the purpose, mission, and core values and beliefs that define the organization.[39] In this process, the teammates meet as equals to discuss the team's purpose, mission, core values, and vision. Leaders should establish meeting norms up front that create a safe and respectful environment to encourage candid dialogue. The intent is to get teammates to reflect and discuss their interpretations of these elements of the core ideology. The open discussion creates understanding, alignment, and commitment to the purpose, mission, core values, and vision. Likewise, leaders should reserve their input to the end and ask probing questions during the discussion. Since open dialogue is the key to creating alignment and commitment, leaders need patience while working through this process, which may take several two-hour sessions. Once established, teams should annually review their core ideology to stayed aligned and connected to the desired culture.

Examples of organizational core values that foster the development of trust throughout the organization would include respect, caring for people, loyalty, honesty in word and deed (integrity), duty, courage, teamwork, excellence (competence), and service to others. If all members of the organization support and hold themselves accountable to these values, then a peer, follower, or leader can reasonably expect that interactions with other members of the organization will be positive and cooperative, which will enable the development of trust.

Policies, procedures, practices, processes, systems, and structure (P4S2s). The P4S2s the organization uses to run day-to-day operations can also significantly influence the development of trust in relationships, between elements, and with key external stakeholders. The P4S2s communicate the organization's underlying assumptions about its values and members. Leaders should strive to ensure that organizational P4S2s are congruent with espoused values and purpose, treat members fairly and with respect, and empower people to work cooperatively.

Regarding organizational structure, leaders should strive to flatten it as much as possible, clarify roles and scope of authority, push decision making to the lowest level practical, reduce stovepipes that isolate elements, and ensure subordinate elements do not have two bosses. Flat organizations, with unity of command and with multiple means for subordinate elements to share information, foster an open and cooperative climate. The open and cooperative climate assists subordinate elements to understand their dependencies on other elements, know what each one is doing to contribute to mission accomplishment, and coordinate efforts to gain efficiencies, which all serve to enhance trust within the organization.

In terms of policies, procedures, practices, processes, and systems, leaders should ensure that they are fair, transparent, inclusive, and promote cooperation. Leaders should periodically review their P4S2s with all relevant stakeholders (both internal and external) to ensure they are functional, efficient, align with core values, encourage the development of trust, and are still necessary given changes to the external environment. This periodic review will assist leaders in identifying any P4S2s that need to be changed to encourage trust, ensure alignment with the core values, and adapt to current or potential changes in the external environment.

To facilitate this periodic review, the senior leader should assign each P4S2 component to someone on the team. The senior leader's role here is to conduct the reviews over twelve or twenty-four months and assign a portion of the P4S2s to be reviewed each month, starting with the most critical. The team member for the specific P4S2 gathers all stakeholders and asks them to compare what happens on a day-to-day basis with what is written in the policy, procedure, process, practice, or system. After identifying potential gaps, the team should discuss root causes for the gaps and what needs to be changed to enhance the P4S2. The process of reviewing P4S2s with all stakeholders will assist in creating commitment and trust among the parties involved while ensuring that day-to-day activities align with the team's core values.

Below are some suggestions regarding P4S2s to enhance the development of trust:

- Review current and new policies, procedures, and systems to ensure they are perceived as treating all members fairly. Fairness is one of the most powerful predictors of trust in leadership.[40]
- Encourage leaders to delegate decision authority to the lowest levels to empower subordinate leaders and communicate trust. Multiple approval levels for minor decisions communicate a lack of trust and reduce operational efficiencies.
- Ensure senior leaders engage with new members regarding the organization's purpose, mission, core values, vision, and history in their first forty-eight hours in the organization to start the socialization process, and then reinforce periodically.
- Use sponsors who are exemplars within the unit to assist new members in their onboarding process to assist in integration and the transmission of the culture.

- Consider unit cohesion and development needs when making personnel assignments and be sure to get input from subordinate leaders on all assignments.
- Maintain unit integrity as much as possible when conducting training to bolster perceptions of individual and collective competence which enhances trust and cohesion.
- Ensure published promotion criteria for each level reinforces the organization's values.
- Counsel members on their potential for promotion or key positions and what they need to work on to earn promotion.
- Ensure that all members are provided training and developmental experiences to prepare them for promotion and desired assignments.
- Use both collective and individual goals in your performance management and incentive systems to encourage teamwork and trust.
- Ensure that performance goals and metrics do not create divergent goals and thus conflict between elements of the organization.
- Enhance cooperation and trust by structuring your reward system to get members to compete against standards of excellence and not against each other.[41]
- Ensure your budget system does not create winners and losers. Leaders should be transparent in how and why resources are allocated to enhance a common situational awareness and manage perceptions of fairness.
- Create a system to share situational, operational, and performance information and also to gain feedback from group members on both the leader's performance and the organization's performance, and ideas on how to improve both.
- Ensure your learning system focuses on promoting growth and not placing blame. Conduct an after-action review (AAR) after every activity to determine what went well, what did not go well, identify what needs to change to improve, and share lessons learned. See chapter 14 regarding the AAR format and process.

To review, organizations' cultures outline the blueprint for the ideal environment for trust to flourish throughout the organizations and with external stakeholders. The P4S2s organizations use to conduct daily operations successfully implement the culture blueprint if they are aligned with core values, enhance the accomplishment of the mission, and encourage the development of trust between individuals, other teams, and external stakeholders. On the other hand, if P4S2s are misaligned with the core values, pit individuals and teams against each other, or hinder efficient mission accomplishment, all fail to implement the cultural blueprint and hinder the development of trust. Leaders should assess and review their P4S2s on a regular basis to ensure the desired culture is being shaped, daily operations are adaptive to changes in the external environment, and conditions are set for trust to flourish.

Context Influences All

The context in which an organization operates shapes how the individual credibility, relationships, and organization factors play out. Below, we provide a range of contextual factors that can significantly influence trust.

Changes in dependencies. Dangerous contexts influence trust in relationships because they impact the nature of dependencies, which could possibly affect members' psychological and physical needs. Changes in dependencies in leader-follower relationships caused by the unique risks inherent in a dangerous context can trigger increased monitoring and a possible shift in the importance individuals place on the leader or follower characteristics perceived necessary to meet the new psychological and physical needs, especially for those with no prior experience with the leader or group member in such a context.[42]

From the group members' perspective, operating in dangerous contexts requires them to significantly increase their dependence on leaders to protect their physical and mental well-being while accomplishing the assigned mission. Therefore, group members place greater importance on their leaders' behavior and seek to verify that they possess characteristics such as competence, character, and caring that help ensure their safety during operations.[43] Results from studies conducted in combat found that soldiers placed the greatest importance, in order of priority, on leaders' competence, caring, and integrity (character). Soldiers believed that (a) leader competence facilitated the accomplishment of the mission in the most efficient manner; (b) loyalty ensured all operations were planned and executed to protect soldiers' well-being; (c) integrity provided faith that information passed about operations was honest regarding importance and risk; and (d) leaders sharing dangers and hardships ensured that leaders' and followers' outcomes were linked and communicated confidence, which reduced the threat to group members' lives and gave them a sense of security.[44]

We noted above that trust is also reciprocal. From the leaders' perspective, the dangerous context increases their dependence on empowering subordinates to accomplish the mission and to provide timely and candid reports about the situation and their units' capabilities. Thus, leaders place a greater importance on follower characteristics such as competence, honesty, and initiative that help ensure mission completion. Results from a study conducted in combat to explore the attributes leaders looked for in trusted followers found that leaders believed (a) competence greatly enhanced the potential for mission completion and thus was the most important; (b) honesty ensured candid and accurate reporting so leaders could plan future operations (c) initiative, discipline, and perseverance provided the unit with adaptability to complete missions in a dynamic environment; and (d) loyalty to the mission and unit contributed to mission accomplishment.[45]

To summarize, if a team or organization needs to operate in a context that it has not trained for or previously operated in, followers' dependencies on their leaders might change, thus triggering a reassessment of trust. As discussed above, soldiers transitioning from a peacetime training environment to a combat environment reassessed the

importance they placed on their leaders' competence, character, and caring during the trust reassessment. Another example might be a police unit shifting from patrolling duties to large-scale riot control duties, wherein members are likely to assess their leaders' competence, particularly in crowd control.

Culture and P4S2s for primary operating context. Leaders need to ensure that their organizations' culture and P4S2s are designed for the primary operational context. For organizations operating in dangerous contexts, leaders need to shape a culture and create P4S2s to enhance cohesion, teamwork, and trust between members and teams; a relentless commitment to mission accomplishment; and a mindset to support the men and women operating at the "point of the spear"—whether that be conducting police patrols, fighting fires, conducting combat operations, providing medical support in war zones, or operating an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico.[46] Dangerous-context leaders who shape their organizations' culture and P4S2s to operate in an administrative context rather than a dangerous context are likely to decrease trust between the people who serve in danger and the people who work in administration. For example, an organization that operates in dangerous contexts and has P4S2s designed for an administrative context might determine it is more cost effective to conduct training as a collective versus as intact teams. In this situation, the organization is likely to save some training dollars at the expense of building trust in operating teams. Leaders, at all levels, should audit their culture and P4S2s to ensure they are focused on mission accomplishment, and equip the men and women operating in harm's way to accomplish their mission. Aligning the organization's culture and P4S2s with the primary operating context assists in setting an environment for trust development and helps ensure mission accomplishment.

Societal cultural norms. Another context factor that leaders of diverse and/or international teams need to consider is societal cultural norms. Societal cultural norms influence members' mental model of an ideal effective leader and how leaders should influence people. An understanding of societal cultural norms helps leaders communicate that they possess the attributes of a leader in that particular society and assists them in adjusting their leadership behavior to honor key societal norms. This is not to say that leaders should try to be something they are not, but rather that leaders should pragmatically study how leadership norms differ in the culture they are operating in and adapt where they can. For instance, if a leader's team includes members from an Asian country that values avoiding direct confrontations in order to save face and supporting the group without standing out, she might adjust her leadership behavior to use more consulting to get members' input, use an indirect approach to provide feedback to avoid publicly embarrassing a person, and focus recognition and praise at the team level versus recognizing individuals. The Globe Study provides leaders with societal cultural profiles that allow them to understand how various societies view leaders and important norms they need to consider to potentially adjust their leadership behavior to honor these norms.[47] Leaders who are unaware of or ignore societal culture norms risk creating trust friction points within their team.

Interorganizational cultures. When operating in a task force context, leaders need to obtain information on the lead organization's culture. Leaders who understand the organization's core values, norms, and ethos can adjust their behavior to facilitate the development of trust and enhance integration. See chapter 15 for details on operating in task forces.

Temporary teams and swift trust. The sniper mission described at the beginning of this chapter provides a context factor that is often present in public safety and military sectors—a situation where several organizations and supporting elements must come together and form a temporary team to accomplish a volatile task. Team members rarely know each other, and if they do, it is often based on individual or unit reputation rather than actual interaction. Leaders in these situations must establish what is sometimes referred to as "swift trust" if they are to be able to exert influence.

While individuals may prefer to observe how a team member performs in a situation before investing trust, they often do not have that luxury in temporary groups. Consequently, they tend to rely on mental shortcuts such as prototypes or mental models of what an ideal team member of the other unit should look like, and then use that prototype as a standard with which to judge the other. For example, in the opening vignette, members of the SWAT team most likely used their prototype of a special operations leader (e.g., strong leader presence, fitness, posture, calmness, confidence) to assess and determine their initial trust in the FBI HRT leader. The closer the target person matches the individual's mental model, the greater the likelihood that the individual will rapidly trust the leader. People use artifacts (unit membership, training, qualifications, posture, leader presence, etc.) to infer a new member's match to their mental model for an ideal leader.[48] As noted earlier, a study conducted in the Iraqi combat zone designed to map soldiers' mental model of the trusted combat leader found that the ideal combat leader possessed the attributes of competence, loyalty, integrity, honesty, confidence, courage, composure, and leading by example, and those attributes were used to determine levels of trust bestowed on the leader.[49]

Leaders can use the prototype of an "ideal" dangerous-context leader to assess themselves for self-development and also to create strategies to communicate their possession of the attributes when taking charge of a temporary team or a new organization. Furthermore, organizations can use the prototype to tailor their leader development programs so they are developing the necessary attributes. From the followers' side, they obviously need to be aware of the potential biases that exist and ensure that they appropriately adjust their trust over time. See chapter 18 for an in-depth discussion of individual and organizational prototypes.

CONCLUSION

Mutual trust is essential to lead effectively, especially in dangerous contexts. The level of trust that group members have in their leaders impacts the amount of influence the leaders can exercise, individual and organization performance, unit cohesion, and followers' job satisfaction.[50] The IROC trust development model provides dangerous-context leaders

with an easy, empirically supported, and systematic framework to evaluate, build, and maintain trust within their organizations. Thus, when leaders hit the "trust point" where their followers must decide whether to follow them into harm's way, they will have what is necessary to lead effectively.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Trust is a foundation of effective leadership across almost every type of organization and circumstance, but it is particularly critical when lives are on the line. People will focus on their personal psychological and physical safety instead of mission success and will limit their support to directives when working with leaders and peers they do not trust.
2. Trust is built substantially upon a leader's competence, character, and caring.
3. Leaders must also invest time and energy to build positive, empowering relationships with their team members and key external stakeholders that are characterized by transparent communications, mutual influence, and cooperation to achieve common goals and purpose.
4. Leaders need to align and leverage the culture and P4S2s of their organization to promote cooperation, fairness, and trust.
5. Dangerous contexts increase the dependencies in leader-follower relationships, which can influence the importance members place on competence, character, and caring; the strength of social bonds (cohesion); and the organization's culture, policies, procedures, practices, processes, systems, and structure (P4S2s).

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CHAPTER 11

Building Resilient Teams

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TEAMS THAT DO WELL in routine and normal circumstances can easily fall apart when confronted with *in extremis* conditions. The qualities that promote team success under normal contexts are different from those that help teams continue to succeed when their operational circumstances turn tumultuous and dangerous. In the original version of this chapter (Zaccaro et al. 2011), we described how to build teams that would be resilient through extreme conditions. We argued that team resilience emerges from (a) focused team-building and team-training interventions that strengthen the individual and team factors contributing to team viability, (b) shared operational experiences that nurture team viability into team resilience, and (c) leadership processes that operate in team training and team operational experiences to facilitate team development and cohesiveness. In essence, we argued that teams need to have a concentrated emphasis on building these resilience skills "before" finding themselves in dangerous and life-threatening situations in order not only to withstand the event(s), but also to bounce back quicker as effective and efficient fighting units.

As we approached the opportunity to revise the chapter for the book's second edition in 2022, we were not surprised to find that a review of recent research in this field validated a general process for team viability and team resilience in effectively setting conditions for team effectiveness when encountering *in extremis* conditions (Alliger et al. 2015; Hartmann, Weiss, and Hoegl 2020; Hartmann, Weiss, Newman, and Hoegl 2020; Stoverink et al. 2020). However, when we reengaged with the company commander who oversaw the fateful 2007 operation described in the original chapter (see below) to see what other lessons could be gleaned from an additional ten years of reflection and growth, we realized that we had unintentionally left out a key component. We discovered that our initial exploration into this topic was too narrowly focused (and time-based) on a team's capacity to withstand and quickly recover from these extreme challenges and stressors. Only by allowing a longer period of time to pass following the distressing

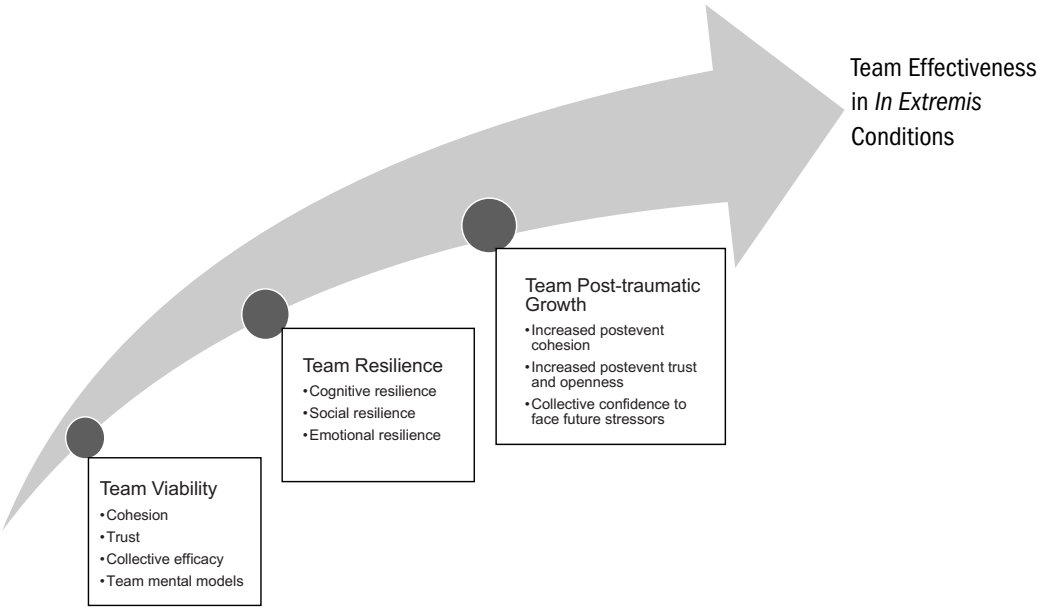

FIGURE 11.1. The Three Elements that Promote Team Effectiveness in *in Extremis* Conditions

event could we begin to discern a pattern of post-traumatic growth (PTG) emerging from these experiences. Indeed, our follow-up interview with the company commander corroborated research suggesting that highly cohesive units who faced greater levels of combat exposure were associated with more PTG than their less cohesive sister units (Mitchell et al. 2013). Accordingly, in this revision, along with our original recommendations about building team viability and resilience, we add some ideas on how unit leaders can foster PTG. Figure 11.1 summarizes the elements of team viability, team resilience, and team growth.

TEAM RESILIENCY: AN ILLUSTRATION

On the morning of August 11, 2007, the soldiers and leaders of a mechanized infantry task force in a rural area of Iraq found themselves in contact with a highly skilled and elusive guerrilla-type enemy that could strike and kill with great efficiency. Numerous irrigation and drainage canals severely restricted friendly freedom of movement and were augmented by a dense mixture of pressure-plated improvised explosive devices (PPIEDs), command-wire improvised explosive devices (CWIEDs), and house-borne improvised explosive devices (HBIEDs).

A single enemy sniper shot rang out in the early morning air, instantly killing the driver of the southernmost Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV). The platoon sergeant began immediate casualty evacuation procedures. The remainder of the platoon leadership directed a defensive posture to report the contact, assess the threat, ascertain where the shot came from, and determine the next course of action. While the battalion tactical operation center coordinated for casualty evacuation and immediate attack aviation

support, the company commander directed a reinforcing platoon into the sector and a subsequent cautious clearance to the south in order to prevent the sniper from successfully egressing the area.

The remainder of the platoon, led by a second lieutenant infantry officer, began a systematic clearance of buildings in the area. After no enemy contact in the first two multilevel buildings, a four-man element consisting of a squad leader, two team leaders, and a rifleman entered the final building. As the first man moved toward the inner stairwell, he inadvertently triggered what an explosive ordnance detection team would later reveal to be a PPIED, which caused the entire building to explode. The sound was deafening and could be heard in the battalion tactical operation center more than two miles away. Within the span of approximately two hours, the infantry platoon lost five soldiers. The clearance operation understandably stalled. The platoon leader directed a tighter defensive posture in order to conduct the mass-casualty evacuation once the fire in the building was under control. The sniper was never caught.

After the platoon leader conducted a relief-in-place briefing with his sister element, the platoon was directed back to the battalion's patrol base, a relatively safe area, to recover and reflect on the day's deadly consequences. Although early into their tour, this unit had already experienced enough casualties to be wholly familiar with the grieving and recovery process. Chaplains, grief counselors, combat stress elements, and leadership from higher headquarters surged to the patrol base to serve as outlets for the soldiers and leaders attempting to deal with the traumatic event. After-action reviews were conducted at all levels to glean as much from the experience as possible. New tactics, techniques, and procedures were quickly developed, disseminated, and practiced horizontally and vertically throughout the organization.

Leaders and soldiers were consoled and allowed time to mourn the loss of their friends and comrades. After cross-attaching new leadership from internal and external sources to assume empty squad- and team-leader positions and allowing them to acclimatize to the unit and area of operation, the platoon was reinserted into the line of fire following a two-day stand down period. This unfortunate event was neither the first nor the last to be experienced by this unit. In early July, the company lost two soldiers to a PPIED triggered in a driveway. There were many similar bad days to come in their long, fifteen-month deployment.

In total, the battalion task force suffered fifteen killed in action and ninety-seven wounded in action. However, there was no immediate or enduring decrement in the performance of its soldiers and leaders. They were able to rapidly and rationally deal with the complex and chaotic situation. They carried both the literal and figurative scars expected from such a traumatic event but were able to go on with their mission. In fact, only one month later, the company served as the task force's main effort element as it extended the battalion's footprint deeper south into al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)–controlled territory in order to establish a reinforced company-sized patrol base that still stands today.

Postscript

In the fall of 2020, thirteen years after the incident described above and nine years after the first edition of this chapter was published, the authors were fortunate to reinterview the Bravo Company commander (John) who oversaw this operation. While he still found it difficult to reexperience the events of August 11, 2007, the extended period between interviews provided a unique opportunity to not only revisit the impact of preparation on how the platoon and company handled the events of that fateful day through a more mature and experienced perspective, but also added a firsthand account of the post-traumatic growth (PTG) that can occur following these harrowing situations.

The true story above was from John's second combat deployment to Iraq. His first had come as a young platoon leader in the beginning of the war. What is unique about this follow-up interview is that John deployed again to Iraq; this time as a battalion commander in 2017, and was able to leverage the knowledge he had gained regarding team resilience to ensure his troops were better positioned to handle the many stressors they were sure to experience. Across all three of John's deployment preparation cycles, there were similarities. Time was always at a finite premium. There was never enough of it to train on everything a leader believed important for the physical and mental health of his or her soldiers—so he had to compromise and prioritize, focusing on the areas most related to surviving in these crucible experiences. Areas that rose to the top of the priority list included: (1) combat immediate action drills (i.e., nearly subconscious reactions to combat engagement with minimal instruction); (2) individual and collective techniques featuring how to move, shoot, and communicate; and (3) immediate life-saving medical techniques. These keys areas were trained in all manner of conditions (day versus night; clear weather versus rain; training when both food- and sleep-deprived; and without key leaders, forcing subordinates to leverage their cross-functional expertise and assume new positions). This unrelenting focus placed a lower priority on the social and emotional impacts of these experiences.

By John's third deployment, however, he recognized that this heavy emphasis on cognitive-oriented tactical training was not enough to ensure long-term resiliency within his unit. His experiences during his first two deployments, combined with the added benefit of time for reflection, served as an unplanned education in building resilient teams. His experiences as a platoon leader and company commander made him a better operations officer and battalion commander in subsequent deployments. He had a better appreciation of what to expect and carried well-earned credibility with his troops. Even though each deployment was slightly different from the one before, he was better able to prioritize what to train to ensure that his unit was optimally prepared for combat's complex environment. While the tactical focus remained important, John felt more balanced. This personal education journey enhanced his empathy and sympathy. He not only had a better sense of what support resources were available but started to incorporate them proactively in training rather than reactively after a catastrophic incident as in August 2007. He also had

a better sense of determining when to stand soldiers down and when to put them back into the fight.

Summary and Observations

This episode took place in an extreme environment characterized by stressors that included hot weather, rough terrain, and an exhausting twenty-four-hour patrol cycle. Confronted by a particularly deadly situation involving traditional and homemade IEDs, the task force members proved to be a resilient unit. How do group members acquire and maintain their hardiness (Bartone 2006) as a unit in the face of such mortal threat and challenge? What are the roles and responsibilities of team leaders in fostering this resilience?

Teams begin to become sustainable when members perceive that working together will result in greater goal accomplishment than if working separately (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). Dangerous contexts can create forces and perceptions that hinder this process if unaddressed by the leader and team members early in the team's developmental cycle. Team developmental processes and leadership actions can counter such negative dynamics by facilitating the emergence and maintenance of team viability and resilience. This is a progressive process, with viability established first, followed by key qualities that promote resilience. This process corresponds to other recent team resilience models, including the "minimize-manage-mend" framework (Alliger et al. 2015, 178; see also Stoverink et al. 2020) and the "Prepare-Absorb-Recover-Adapt" model (Zemba et al. 2019, 603). Certain groups may also develop the capacity not only to respond effectively to extreme events, but to experience growth as a team from the experience. The next sections of this chapter describe the viability and resilience components that facilitate this building process (see figure 11.1) and elements of post-traumatic team growth.

THE ELEMENTS OF TEAM VIABILITY

Team viability refers to how strongly members are committed to working together in close coordination and to their sustained ability to do so effectively (Barrick et al. 1998; Sundstrom et al. 1990). A viable team possesses the qualities required for the team to develop resilience. As such, they reflect some of the "minimize" resilience behaviors defined by Alliger et al. (2015, 178) as preparing the team for dangerous events. One distinction, though, is that most of their specified minimizing behaviors occur within team performance episodes in the planning or transition phase (Marks et al. 2001). Team viability is more focused on interpersonal processes associated with affect management and the development of team motivation and collective confidence that in turn contribute to team resilience (Marks et al. 2001; Stoverink et al. 2020). The four key elements of team viability that can promote resilience are cohesion, trust, collective efficacy, and team mental models—all of which can be influenced by the leader (Alliger et al. 2015; Stoverink et al. 2020; Sundstrom et al. 1990).

Cohesion

The strengths of attraction or attachment members have to the team—that is, their willingness to serve within the team—is their cohesion factor (Festinger, 1950). Researchers have described three main sources for the attachments and bonds that exist in cohesive groups (Back 1950; Festinger 1950). The first, social cohesion, refers to the degree of interpersonal attraction among team members; in other words, the extent to which they like each other (Carron 1982). Members can commit to other members and to the team as a whole simply because they like them. The second source, task cohesion, refers to the degree of interest members have for the team's tasks and mission and the extent to which they like them (Carron 1982). This attraction can flow from the intrinsic nature of the task or from the extrinsic rewards and outcomes team members derive from task accomplishment. The third source of cohesion is a sense of pride engendered by group membership (Festinger 1950). Some groups possess a long and prestigious tradition, and admission to such groups may be limited and difficult to attain. Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams, specialized firefighter units, and Army Special Forces are examples of these kinds of teams. The bonding of members in these groups may follow not only from task and social ties but also from loyalty to each other as members of an elite unit.

Building team cohesion. Each source of cohesion can follow from different antecedents. Interpersonal attraction derives from several factors, including similarity (Byrne 1961) and familiarity (Zajonc 1968). As team members discover shared backgrounds, interests, attitudes, beliefs, and values, their fondness for one another increases (Byrne and Nelson 1965). Also, as team members spend more time together, their liking for one another grows, as long as initial interactions are not negative (Swap 1977). This happens because the uncertainty common to meeting strangers typically gives way to more positive reactions; with repeated interactions, members learn more about one another and typically discover little ground for wariness (Lee 2001).

These findings suggest that leaders can build social cohesion by providing new team members opportunities to (a) become familiar with one another and (b) discover similarities among themselves. Thus, early in a team's formation, leaders might have members engage in social activities that they determine most or all would enjoy. They can also simply ensure frequent interactions among members to foster greater familiarity. Given the deleterious effects of early negative interactions, leaders need to intervene quickly in such events so that they do not derail emerging social cohesion.

Task cohesion emerges when team members value and commit to the unit's work. Hackman and Oldham (1975) defined five core elements of jobs that make them intrinsically interesting: significance (the importance of the work), variety (greater range in the different skills required to do the work), identity (involvement in all aspects of the work being completed), autonomy (decision-making freedom provided by the work), and feedback (knowing how one is performing). For many military and first responder units working in dangerous environments these elements are often a given. Their work typically

is of great significance, whether responding to a threat to the nation or to a catastrophe in a community. Members of such units typically need to use a range of skills in completing their mission and will participate at all stages of the mission, whose desired outcome is often self-evident. High work engagement has been linked to lower fatigue reported by soldiers after deployment (Boermans et al. 2014).

To build group cohesion, leaders need to foster the shared belief that only by collaborating effectively can team members gain the benefits of task accomplishment. Thus, leaders should emphasize to team members that they can realize more significant effects by working together (Sweeney, Thompson, and Blanton 2009; Thibaut and Kelley 1959). This interdependence of action is often truer in dangerous conditions because effective collective action will save the most lives. The threat of personal danger, however, can result in members forgetting this connectivity. Thus, leaders need to continually reinforce the notion that remaining a cohesive group when confronted with extreme danger provides the best chance for survival.

Although not highlighted in the Iraq vignette, there were many actions the leaders and soldiers engaged in during their mission preparation that assisted in developing critical social and task cohesion. The shared hardships of countless iterations of intense, realistic training created a climate that fostered confidence in individual tactical skills that translated into subsequent trust and faith in each other and their leadership as a collective unit (see similar examples in Sweeney 2007; Sweeney, Thompson, and Blanton 2009). They also had sufficient time to interact with one another in more relaxed settings and develop the kinds of social and friendship bonds that promote social cohesion.

Trust

Mature and viable teams have members that trust one another. Research suggests that team trust reflects several beliefs that members have about one another. First, members have confidence in the skills and abilities of their fellow members to successfully complete their part of the team's mission (Cook and Wall 1980; McAllister 1995). This assumed reliability exists even when missions become complex and difficult. Second, members believe that their teammates' behavior will consistently match their word, implying dependability and indicating that members will honor commitments they make to one another (Bromiley and Harris 2006; Cummings and Bromiley 1996). Third, team members have communication and interactions that are honest and open; there is no expectation or reality of hidden agendas among members. Fourth, members assume a common goodwill toward one another and, more important, mutual care and emotional support (McAllister 1995). This element reflects perhaps the deepest level of team trust and is particularly important for teams operating in dangerous environments. Chapter 10 explores trust in detail.

The resilient team in Iraq demonstrated the importance of these elements of trust. When the driver of the IFV was killed by the sniper, the unit engaged in activities to evacuate casualties, locate and track the sniper, and clear surrounding buildings. To work

effectively as a unit under those circumstances, team members needed to trust absolutely in the competency and reliability of one another, to believe that each person knew what had to be done and how to do it. More important, especially after the triggering of the HBIED, members needed to rely on one another for emotional support; they needed to trust that they could display strong emotions and grief to one another and know that they would be consoled and nurtured without judgment. Emotional trust contributes greatly to the resilience of a team.

Building team trust. Assumed reliability, verbal dependability, mutual honesty, and mutual emotional support are all aspects of team trust. What can leaders do to facilitate the development of cognitive and emotional trust in team members? Jarvenpaa and Leidner (1999) found in a study of geographically distant teams that early task communication fostered reliability. In addition, early social communication through which members get to know about one another lays the foundation for later emotional trust. Leaders of newly formed groups should encourage and provide opportunities for such information exchanges. Leaders need to ensure that role and normative expectations are clear to all members (Mayerson et al. 1996). Such communication contributes to assumed reliability, allowing members to have faith in the competence of their fellow teammates. This perceived reliability will often develop quickly in military units and first responder teams that go into dangerous environments because they typically receive intensive task training before joining or being accepted to the team. Thus, the assumption at group formation is that members assigned to the team have high minimum levels of competence.

Leaders can also foster team trust by insisting on verbal dependability—that is, following through on stated commitments—as a strong norm in the group. This means that leaders must "walk the talk" as well, keeping their word to the team and leading by example. They do so by embedding with the team in dangerous contexts, sharing the threat equally with their subordinates. In addition, leaders contribute to development of team trust by promoting an atmosphere of openness and judgment-free communication. They stress that members are not allowed to censor one another's well-intentioned and honest communications, creating what Edmondson (1999) called an environment of psychological safety. Leaders set norms that lead to feelings of safety and trust by (a) indicating that inputs are needed from all members, (b) listening to members' concerns, (c) being receptive and encouraging members to listen to others' ideas, and (d) modeling psychological safety by engaging in appropriate self-disclosure (Edmondson 2003; Stoverink et al. 2020).

Collective Efficacy

Collective efficacy is "a sense of collective competence shared among individuals when allocating, coordinating, and integrating their resources in a successful concerted response to specific situational demands" (Zaccaro et al. 1995, 309; see also Bandura 1986). This definition emphasizes team members' shared belief that they can work well together—that

is, they have "coordination capabilities" (Zaccaro et al. 1995, 311). For in extremis contexts, collective efficacy means the team members share the belief that they can meet the threats and dangers confronting them. Such beliefs have been shown to be a key driver of team resilience (Vera et al. 2017).

Collective efficacy contributes to team effectiveness in several important ways, particularly in dangerous circumstances. Members of efficacious groups are more likely to work harder on behalf of the group, set more challenging goals, and persist in the face of difficulties and obstacles (Zaccaro et al. 1995). Also, as members gain confidence in the team's collective competence, group cohesion grows stronger. Such perceptions are strongly related to the assumed reliability elements of team trust. Thus, collective efficacy buttresses the two other elements of team viability. Very high collective efficacy does, however, have a downside (Stoverink et al. 2020). Teams with high collective efficacy may underestimate risks to the team or overestimate their ability to handle danger; such teams may also over-rely on existing information and fail to update situational awareness and attend to signs of emergent danger. Thus, team confidence may have an inverted U-shaped relationship with resilience (Stoverink et al. 2020).

Building collective efficacy. Belief in one's own efficacy or that of one's team tends to emerge from consistent patterns of successful past performance (Bandura 1986; Tasa et al. 2007). Collective efficacy can also derive from patterns of constructive feedback that allow the team to determine reasons for specific failures and develop corrective measures (Zaccaro et al. 1995). Also, leaders who encourage their teams to work hard, help members enhance their skills, model effective task and teamwork behaviors, and carry out certain leadership functions effectively increase the collective competence beliefs of their subordinates (Kane et al. 2002; Zaccaro et al. 2001).

To build collective efficacy, a leader needs to provide opportunities for team members to develop a record of success. This can be done most easily through training exercises, where members focus on learning and rehearsing effective teamwork. One key is to provide team members opportunities to see their teammates exhibiting teamwork behaviors. Leaders should make use of feedback after team exercises to help members understand (a) that any failures are not a consequence of team incompetence but are correctable mistakes, and (b) they can devise team strategies for avoiding such mistakes on future missions (Villado 2008; Villado and Arthur 2013). Throughout team-training exercises and missions, leaders need to assure members that they have the ability to perform the tasks at hand (Zaccaro et al. 2001). They also need to model effective teamwork. From such experience, team collective efficacy develops and contributes to team viability.

How can leaders prevent teams from developing overconfidence that can lead to minimizing risk and over-relying on current information or outdated situational reports? Alliger et al. (2015) defined several team readiness behaviors that leaders can use to counter overconfidence. First, leaders can provide information to the team on the state of

its current readiness, including its vulnerabilities. Such information can make the team aware not only of its strengths but also of potential weaknesses, which can help the team accurately calibrate risk. Second, leaders can help the team anticipate its challenges and continuously update its situational reports and awareness (Alliger et al. 2015). Such actions would facilitate the team's appropriate consideration of information. Finally, leaders "can ensure that warnings about potential problems are not dismissed prematurely" (Alliger et al. 2015, 181). This action strikes directly at one key effect of overconfidence—the tendency not to take potential challenges seriously enough.

Team Mental Models

Teams enhance their sense of viability and their performance under dangerous conditions by developing shared cognitive representations about team actions (Resick et al. 2010; Stoverink et al. 2020). Cannon-Bowers et al. (1993) outlined two types of team mental models that are important for team viability and resilience. The first refers to shared knowledge about team members and their roles on the team. The second refers to the members' shared understanding about how they will complete key team missions, specifically what the responsibilities of each member are and how members will coordinate their actions. Such mental models reduce process inefficiencies in teams and speed team responses to typical challenges. In the form of standard operating procedures, they can also help minimize cognitive load during the management of threats, boosting the capacity for team resilience (Alliger et al. 2015). As we note below, this aspect of team mental models is vital for building cognitive resilience.

Building team mental models. Earlier, we noted that leaders can develop collective efficacy by using training exercises to build a record of success. Such exercises can also help members learn their own and others' roles and develop patterns of working together (Mathieu et al. 2000). Leaders can facilitate this process by conducting careful briefings and debriefings in training simulations to help team members develop expert-level shared mental models (Smith-Jentsch et al. 2008).

Training simulations can foster shared mental models of standard team processes. What about unknown situations not covered in training? Key preparatory resilience behaviors include conducting contingency planning in which, during transition phases of team performance, team members anticipate potential challenges and plan how they might respond to them (Alliger et al. 2015; see also Stoverink et al. 2020). Such planning is effective in producing flexible mental models and improving team performance (DeChurch and Haas 2008; Stout et al. 1999) and is a key part of cognitive resilience (see below). Shared interaction models for typical team situations can provide the basis for effective flexible mental models that contribute to resilience as situations become more dangerous. Leaders can add to this effectiveness by providing clear guidance on their intent, which in turn helps teams make adjustments in accordance with that intent (Marks et al. 2001). Table 11.1 summarizes leader actions that facilitate team viability.

TABLE 11.1

Summary of Leader Actions that Facilitate Components of Team Viability

Element	*Contextual Definition*	*Facilitating Actions by Team Leaders*
Cohesion • Social • Task • Pride	Strength of attachment members have to the team • Social cohesion: degree of interpersonal attraction among members • Task cohesions: degree of interest members have in mission tasks • Pride: sense of fulfillment members derive from social identification with the unit	• Maximize opportunities to become familiar with each other and discover similarities • Address task significance, variety of tasks and missions, emphasize identity and levels of autonomy, and provide feedback • Emphasize interdependence of outcomes • Accentuate and highlight salience of proud traditions
Trust • Assumed reliability • Verbal dependability • Mutual honesty • Mutual emotional support	Possessing confidence in the skills and abilities of team members and leaders, leading to bonding and open communication and genuine caring	• Encourage opportunities to engage in frequent task and social communications early in the team's formation • Establish clear roles and normative expectations; insist on verbal dependability as a norm • Lead by example • Share experiences in hard, realistic training events • Reflect on reliability and dependability of teammate and leader actions • Encourage sharing of open and honest assessments of skill level, values, beliefs, and emotions
Collective efficacy	Sense of shared confidence among members that they can work effectively as a team in response to specific challenges	• Provide constructive feedback to address gaps in individual and collective skills and abilities • Build upon success with multiple and increasingly difficult drills to develop patterns of success • Model effective task and teamwork behaviors • Minimize overconfidence by ensuring team is aware of its vulnerabilities relative to upcoming challenges
Team mental models	• Shared knowledge about team members and their roles on the team • Shared understanding about how the team will complete key team missions through coordinated action	• Conduct careful briefings and debriefings in training simulations to help members learn their own and others' roles and develop patterns of working together • Conduct contingency planning in which team members anticipate potential challenges and plan how they might respond to them

MOVING FROM TEAM VIABILITY TO TEAM RESILIENCY

Team viability, or maturity, is an important prerequisite for team resilience, but it is not alone sufficient. Teams also need to develop certain norms and procedures that help them cope with the extraordinary cognitive and emotional demands of highly dangerous missions. A recent review of team resilience research listed thirteen definitions of this construct that have appeared in the recent literature (see table 1 in Stoverink et al. 2020). These definitions suggest that several qualities denote resilient teams. First, such teams are able to absorb shocks from external stressors and adverse events and sustain high performance (Carmeli et al. 2013). If such shocks cause a setback or decrement in team performance, they are able to recover or "bounce back" to high performance levels (Sharma and Sharma 2016, 37). Table 11.2 offers a number of suggestions on how team resiliency can be maintained and strengthened before, during, and after dangerous events. In the following sections we group these into strategies for building cognitive, social, and emotional resilience (see also Hartmann, Weiss, and Hoegl 2020).

Strategies for Building Team Resilience

Dangerous events can influence three sets of processes in less resilient teams: (1) severe danger can impair how team members think and process information; (2) imminent threat can disrupt the cohesion of the unit; and (3) the possibility of dying, and its actual or near occurrence, can raise strong emotions that disrupt interactions among remaining team members. Building team resilience requires interventions that counter the influences of threat and danger on team cognition, social bonds, and emotional dynamics (Hartmann, Weiss, and Hoegl 2020). These interventions go beyond building team viability to focusing on helping teams perform effectively and maintain viability when in danger. A number of strategies are necessary to foster team cognitive, social, and emotional resiliency.

Building cognitive resiliency. Threat and danger narrow the cognitive focus of a team and impair individual and collective information processing (Staw et al. 1984; Weick 1993). Leaders can help their teams become more cognitively resilient through four types of interventions: overtraining of routine but critical drills, rehearsals and contingency planning, establishment of information communication norms, and after-action reviews.

In the course of a dangerous mission, when unit members are engaged in the most critical and threatening part of an operation (e.g., when under attack), there are many "routine" actions and maneuvers that need to occur in addition to any necessary adaptive and nontypical responses. For example, in the Iraq scenario above, after the sniper had killed the IFV driver, the unit needed to (a) begin casualty evacuation procedures, (b) set up a defensive posture, (c) develop a plan to try to prevent the sniper from escaping, and (d) undertake a building-clearing operation. Had unit members not already rehearsed these activities, they would have spent precious cognitive resources trying to conduct them instead of tending to the adaptive actions necessary to succeed in the crisis. Such typical activities should be "overtrained" (Schendel and Hagman 1982, 606) to the point where

TABLE 11.2

Summary of Leader Actions that Facilitate Components of Team Resilience and Post-Traumatic Growth

Element	*Contextual Definition*	*Facilitating Actions by Team Leaders*
Cognitive resilience	Ability to focus cognitive resources on necessary adaptive and nontypical actions as conditions of threat impair information-processing capacity	• Overtraining of routine but critical drills; cross-training • Rehearsals and contingency planning • Establishment of norms for communicating information • After-action reviews • Foster a climate of psychological safety to resolve team member tensions when deciding to persist or adapt in the face of danger • Create meta-routines that address when and how to decide whether to persist or to adapt on a course of action • Engage in both pre- and post-action transition phases to help team members reduce the cognitive load of dangerous circumstances
Social resilience	Maintenance of cohesion among team members under conditions of high threat; grounded in the understanding that members are more likely to survive and be successful in the face of danger if they maintain their team bond and work together as a group	• Intensive team training to encourage collective efficacy, trust, and confidence
Emotional resilience	Capacity to manage one's own and others' emotions under conditions of threat	• Pre-event: conducting emotional rehearsals and simulations during training and mission preparation • During: modeling calmness prior to, during, and after traumatic events • Post-event: honest reviewing of event for sense making; sharing emotional responsibility; providing emotional coping support
Team post-traumatic growth	Positive changes a team experiences as a result of traumatic events, as reflected in stronger bonds of cohesion, greater trust in and openness to team members, and a greater sense of confidence in handling future stressors	• Provide a safe space for soldiers to engage in post-trauma processing, and act as a social support for them • Model and help guide members' new understanding and narratives after traumatic events • Encourage team reflexivity, by which members can discuss the team's core mission, the collective meaning of its purpose, and the association of their actions to its purpose

members collectively conduct them automatically, without much if any need for conscious processing. This approach applies not only to physical tasks but also to cognitive ones such as information retention. Thus, team leaders need to ensure that all members have been trained to this standard and use refresher training to reinforce it (Schendel and Hagman 1982). Standard operating procedures, typically established through overtraining, can reduce stress on the team in exigent circumstances (Alliger et al. 2015). Such training becomes even more important when new people join the team so that the team continues to act automatically.

In his description of a unit's failure in the Mann Gulch fire disaster, a wildfire in Montana's Helena National Forest that claimed the lives of thirteen firefighters in 1949, Weick (1993) noted that rigid adherence to their formally defined role structure was a significant factor in the collapse of sense making for the unit and pointed out the failure of most members to take on new roles as team members were separated, lost, or killed. Role substitutability can be promoted through cross-training, "a strategy in which each team member is trained on the tasks, duties, and responsibilities of his or her fellow team members" (Volpe et al. 1996, 87). Cross-training can entail having members describe their tasks and roles to other team members, model their role for other members, or engage in exercises in which they perform different roles (Blickensderfer et al. 1998). This training strategy produces a shared understanding of how individual roles are integrated in team action and consequently leads to better team coordination and performance (Marks et al. 2002). Thus, to foster team resiliency, team leaders should combine overtraining strategies with cross-training interventions.

A potential disadvantage of such approaches is that team resilience can entail confronting "a choice of whether to persist in a current course of action or to adapt to an alternative course of action" (Stoverink et al. 2020, 399). Overtraining can produce a tendency to want to persist in the familiar routine. Moreover, team members can disagree on whether to persist or adapt. Leaders can help teams resolve this tension by fostering a climate of psychological safety in which to discuss such choices (see below; also Stoverink et al. 2020). They can also prepare the team by creating meta-routines, or norms and protocols about when and how teams will change existing routines (Adler et al. 1999; Feldman and Pentland 2003). This is not the same as contingency planning (see below), which is driven by specific anticipated events. Meta-routines address the process of deciding when and how to adapt versus persist in a course of action. Such discussions occurring in the planning or transition phase, before team action, can mitigate the tension between choices to persist or adapt when dangerous situations arise (Alliger et al. 2015; Stoverink et al. 2020).

What strategies foster cognitive adaptability in dangerous missions? Tucker and Gunther (2009) interviewed Army leaders who had served in Iraq and Afghanistan and twenty-four Joint Readiness Training Center facilitators and found that adaptability occurred when team leaders and members engaged in contingency planning that entailed "thinking through alternative scenarios that could occur along a predetermined route prior to the

mission, such as enemy contact and interactions with civilians" (323). The authors suggested developing alternative strategies for missions, defining multiple possible outcomes, and engaging in adversarial thinking (taking the perspective of the enemy) as cognitive approaches to foster adaptive performance. These strategies likely help leaders anticipate possible changes in their environment and prepare them to adapt quickly when these occur. Leaders are advised here to use these strategies in their mission planning or in the transition phase of team operations (Marks et al. 2001). Also, time permitting, they should rehearse alternative strategies and scenarios in which leaders are killed and team members are forced to assume new roles (Tucker and Gunther 2009). Recent models of team resilience have cited such preparatory planning as critical to reducing the effects of exigent challenges to the team (Alliger et al. 2015; Stoverink et al. 2020).

In the chaos of crisis situations, information exchange and continual situational awareness can be among the first processes to break down among nonresilient individuals and teams (Weick 1993). To counter such an occurrence, leaders need to foster strong norms in team members to keep communicating vital information throughout crisis episodes (Alliger et al. 2015; Baran and Scott 2010). They can use simulations and war-gaming to help enforce these behaviors (Paton 2006). Leaders also need to model information communication in crises, including asking specific members for specific information. In a crisis, leaders should inform their followers "what they know has occurred, explaining what is being done about it now (and what steps are being taken so it won't happen again), and, when possible, describing implications" (Klann 2003, 44–45). It should be added that such actions are likely to further team members' trust in the leader.

Team leaders need to make effective use of after-action reviews to examine the information processing and decision making that occurred in the mission. Most important, from a cognitive standpoint, is to determine how shared understandings among team members should be adjusted to accommodate enemy tactics or unanticipated events in a disaster. Note that in the Iraq vignette, after-action reviews were conducted to gain as much insight from the experience as possible. Based on this knowledge, new tactics and operating procedures were quickly developed, disseminated, and practiced throughout the organization. The unit did not allow the emotions generated by the loss of comrades to interfere with this crucial cognitive endeavor. Such actions help resilient teams respond more effectively in future missions.

To enhance cognitive resilience in teams, leaders need to engage in both pre- and post-action transition phases as well as in the action phases of dangerous events (Alliger et al. 2015; Marks et al. 2001; Stoverink et al. 2020). This corresponds to the "minimize-manage-mend" model of Alliger et al. (2015, 178). Leaders set the conditions in planning phases to help team members reduce the cognitive load of dangerous circumstances. They monitor and manage information flow during crises to maintain team situational awareness. Finally, they debrief in post-action transition phases to foster team learning and revise team mental models in anticipation of future events.

Building social resiliency. One particular danger to a group in a moment of disaster or mortal threat is that members will start to worry more about self-preservation than collective survival and will begin to act as individuals rather than as a team. To avoid such disintegration, team leaders need to establish early in team training the firm belief that individual survival is maximized when the team acts together. For example, the unit in Iraq developed critical social cohesion through countless hours of personal interaction during mission preparation and training. The collective interdependence of tasks and mission created a sense of team unity and trust and faith in each other. This cohesion can translate into a strong commitment to each other in action—a mentality of "Don't worry. I got your back"—especially when the team is in danger. In operation, such team members experience a shift from a focus on self-preservation to a collective sense of others; that is, the team remains more important than the individual.

Although fear and anxiety are key characteristics when encountering *in extremis* environments, team members' sense of affiliation with the group helps mitigate the debilitating effects of these elements. In dangerous environments, soldiers commonly engage in acts of self-sacrifice to protect their buddies. The Army reinforces this conduct through what is perhaps its strongest norm—no soldier is to be left behind—and by touting as its bravest soldiers those who risk or sacrifice their lives to save their comrades, among them Medal of Honor recipients (Collier 2006). The Army stresses selfless service as one of its core values. Indeed, research has shown that acts of compassion in the form of rendering and receiving both physical and emotional help on the battlefield are associated with post-traumatic growth (see below) (Larick and Graf 2012).

Prominent among the strategies noted here for reinforcing team cognitive resilience is extensive training as a team. Such exercises foster cognitive resilience by routinizing interactions necessary in a crisis and developing the shared understandings needed for team adaptation. This type of training potentially has other effects that contribute to social resilience. First, as noted earlier, repeated interactions as a team within training scenarios can boost the collective efficacy of the group; this in turn can enhance cohesion. Second, such training can contribute to trust in the leader. As teams train with their leaders, they gain confidence in their competence, a key element in subordinate trust (Sweeney 2010). Thus, many of the strategies suggested here for cognitive resilience will likely have ancillary effects for team cohesion, trust, and efficacy (see Cacioppo et al. 2011 for another perspective on social resilience).

Building emotional resiliency. The core challenge to teams in *in extremis* conditions is managing the strong emotional turmoil triggered by individual and collective mortality salience. In the case of such turmoil, team emotional resilience can emerge from three processes: the team leader serving as a model for calmness throughout traumatic events; emotional rehearsals during team training and mission-planning processes; and emotion regulation processes in post-action phases of a mission. The Iraq example illustrates the first process, in that a young and relatively unseasoned junior officer was subjected to a

chaotic environment few can imagine. Rather than freezing during this intense situation, the repetitive nature of the realistic training and extensive contingency planning the unit had completed helped the platoon leader take immediate and effective action.

The leader's demeanor had a calming and direct effect on the unit's psyche, although internally he may have been the opposite of calm. It is not mentioned explicitly in the vignette, but the unit had verbally and physically rehearsed the types of tragedies that could occur on a battlefield (such as being wounded or killed in action). Regardless of their desire to stop and administer aid to their fallen comrade, the team had to first eliminate the threat. All understood, however, that aid would be administered and that no team member would be left behind. This trust and faith helped bridge the visual and traumatic chaos team members experienced, and greatly assisted later when the unit was able to reflect on the day's events.

When teams encounter *in extremis* conditions, they look to their leaders to make sense of the situation and to provide behavioral guidance (Yammarino et al. 2010). At a minimum, leaders need to display an unruffled, cool, and consistent exterior demeanor that models how team members should respond. Failure to do so could result in a form of emotional contagion (Hatfield et al. 1994) whereby panic shown by the leader permeates the rest of the team. Researchers have identified two leader attributes that may contribute to the impression of a sense of calm. The first, mental toughness, stems from the sports psychology literature and consists of an ability to display calmness despite inner turmoil (Mack and Ragan 2008; Loehr 1986). The second attribute is hardiness (Bartone 2006; Maddi 2007), which reflects the leader's belief that people can "control . . . the events of their experience," a deep commitment to one's life activities, and the perception of both positive and negative changes as learning opportunities (Kobasa 1979, 3; see also Bonanno 2004). Perceptions of control and approaching negative effects as learning experiences thus help hardy individuals tamp down feelings of threat in *in extremis* conditions (Bonanno 2004).

Mental toughness and hardiness are often viewed as stable individual attributes. A team's emotional resilience may depend on selecting team leaders who possess these attributes. Maddi and colleagues developed training programs that have demonstrated success in fostering hardiness in adults (Maddi 2007; Maddi et al. 1998). This line of research suggests that such training should be part of building team resilience. Indeed, with the goal of reducing PTSD, depression, and anxiety associated with combat trauma, the Army introduced the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program in 2009 to assess the status of its 1.1 million active duty, Reservist, and National Guard soldiers and enhance their coping strategies (Cornum et al. 2011; U.S. Army n.d.).

Emotional rehearsals represent another mechanism for building team emotional resilience. These involve leaders and trainers increasing soldiers' awareness about the emotional dimensions of combat. Along this line, Paton (2006) argued that training simulations for police officers should reflect the psychological demands and challenges individuals are likely to confront in dangerous circumstances. He noted that such training

can "help increase knowledge of stress reactions and provide opportunities for officers to rehearse strategies to deal with them" (200). Increasing awareness of possible emotional reactions may also be effective as part of mission planning. Unit leaders can remind unit members, especially those who have never been in combat, of the emotional demands they are likely to encounter and to be prepared with recommended coping responses. Alliger et al. (2015) placed these and similar emotion preparation activities in their preparatory set of resilience behaviors designed to minimize the impact of crises and challenges.

The value of these mental rehearsals of emotional events derives from the literature about inoculation and forewarning effects on resistance to persuasion (McGuire 1964). As members experience a degree of psychological threat in training and simulations, they may begin to build emotional defenses and coping mechanisms, including problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Baker and Berenbaum 2007); likewise, when forewarned during mission planning about combat stressors, they may increase their readiness to activate such mechanisms.

Perhaps the most important contribution to building team resilience lies in post-combat processes engaged in by the team. Post-operation briefings play crucial roles in emotional resilience. First, in missions that did not achieve full success, analyzing the causes helps build a sense of collective responsibility and a clearer understanding of how to cope with such events in future missions (Hannah et al. 2010). Resilient teams are ones that thrive at dissecting their failures because they realize that the investigation of particular issues or problems does not necessarily reflect their personal failure, but rather is a more critical assessment of what was supposed to happen, what did happen, why (contributing factors to faulty decision or action), and what they need to do or change in order to prevent a repeat of the outcome. The exceptional leaders and teams are those who do not follow up one mistake (making it during an action or performance episode) with another (by not acknowledging the mistake and thus failing to fully understand it and learn from it). The value of problem-focused coping to emotional resilience lies in the sense of control it engenders in team members, lessening the likelihood of feelings of helplessness in such situations.

The second role of post-traumatic-event processes is to help team members confront as honestly and openly as possible the emotional consequences of experiencing *in extremis* events. This emotion-focused coping may take the form of an active action, such as sharing the burden of teammates lost, or a passive one in which the leader and team recognize that they need space and time to deal with losses. A crucial element is the provision of support from outside the team, because all members of a traumatized unit may need support, rendering internal provisioning of emotional support difficult (Paton and Violanti 2007). Stephens et al. (2013) described as a key part of resilience the emotional carrying capacity of individuals and teams; that is, the capacity for the constructive expression of both positive and negative emotions in relationships. Pre-traumatic-event processes are intended to increase such capacity, while post-traumatic-event processes should focus on its effective use.

Along this line, the unit described in the Iraq scenario received substantial outside support as "chaplains, grief counselors, combat stress elements, and leadership from higher headquarters surged to the patrol base to serve as outlets for the soldiers and leaders attempting to deal with the traumatic event." As evidenced by the unit's ability to recover rapidly, reset, and return to the field of battle, the combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping in after-action reviews of traumatic operations can substantially assist the team in building and maintaining emotional resilience.

Fostering Post-traumatic Team Growth

Recent work on team resilience has also identified the ability of a team not only to cope with and recover from aversive events but to actually grow from the experience. Stephens et al. (2013, 15), for example, defined resilience as not only including shock absorption and recovery, but also the ability to "learn and grow from the adversity to emerge stronger than before." This is similar to the phenomenon of post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004), in which some individuals have the capacity to thrive after experiencing traumatic episodes. Efforts by teams and their leaders to build emotional resilience can foster the conditions for post-traumatic growth (see chapter 8 for an in-depth discussion regarding leading to promote post-traumatic growth).

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) has been defined as "positive, meaningful psychological changes that an individual can experience as a result of coping with traumatic life events" (Habib et al. 2018, 617). Such growth is not simply a "return to baseline—it is an experience of improvement that for some persons is deeply profound" (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2004, 4). Such growth can take the form of a shift in personal priorities, stronger relationships, new life pathways and possibilities, and spiritual growth. Habib et al. (2018) noted that some soldiers indicated experiencing such personal thriving after combat trauma. In particular, soldiers reported "increased empathy, being more compassionate and sensitive to the feelings of others and being better prepared for future unexpected events" (621). In the vignette, post-traumatic growth was evident in John's leadership in subsequent deployments. He had a better understanding of what to expect in combat situations and therefore had greater credibility with his soldiers. His greater balance and enhanced empathy helped him calibrate the most appropriate emotional and social resources for his units.

PTG has been examined mostly as an individual-level phenomenon; however, an extrapolation of individual PTG to the team suggests that for teams, PTG may be reflected in stronger bonds of cohesion, greater trust in and openness to team members, and a greater sense of confidence in handling future stressors. In other words, the elements of team viability grow to levels higher than they were prior to the trauma experience. Dickinson (2020) argued that PTG is more likely when individuals actually had lower levels of factors that foster resilience prior to traumatic events, because such events are more profound shocks, triggering more of the cognitive processes that foster PTG. This suggests that military teams with lower levels of viability and resilience prior to combat may

experience more PTG if their leaders can manage effectively the post-trauma cognitive, social, and emotional processes in their units.

PTG may emerge from processes of reflection on and interpretation of traumatic events. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2004) argued that PTG requires a "seismic event" (5) that challenges and even shatters a person's preconceived understanding of self and the world. This challenging of fundamental assumptions leads to rumination, reflection, and interpretation that, supported by social resources, can lead to new understanding and personal meaning. "The trauma itself is not the source of growth and change," Dickinson (2020) noted, "but rather a person's interpretation of what has happened to them and the new life narrative that they create for themselves after what they have experienced" (504) (chapter 9 discusses the process of meaning making to promote PTG).

Leaders can foster this cognitive processing by providing a safe space for soldiers to engage in such processing and receive social support. They can also model and help guide individual team members' emerging understanding and narratives. Finally, team leaders can help foster the learning processes in teams that can promote growth in the team's shared knowledge and mental models by encouraging team reflexivity—"the extent to which team members overtly reflect upon the group's objectives, strategies, and processes and adapt them to current anticipated endogenous or environmental circumstances" (West 1996, 559). Schippers et al. (2015) noted that such collective reflection is geared toward interpreting prior events as well as preparing for future events. Thus, team reflexivity includes some of the minimize-and-mend resilience behaviors Alliger et al. (2015) described. We argue, however, that for team PTG, team reflexivity and learning need to go deeper than team performance tactics and strategies. Team members may need to confront the team's core mission and purpose, the collective meaning of its purpose, and the association of team actions to that purpose.

Such collective reflection can lead to greater closeness among unit members and strong team cohesion. In their review of PTG in military personnel, Habib et al. (2018) reported that such personnel "described how being deployed and experiencing trauma made them feel close to their colleagues, who they described as family, expressing how they felt closer to them than their own biological family upon returning from deployment" (621; see also Larick and Graf 2012).

To foster PTG among team members as well as in the team as a whole, leaders should encourage individual and collective meaning making after traumatic events. U.S. Army researchers (Wood et al. 2020) defined several leadership behaviors designed to foster personal and unit PTG, including encouraging unit members to find meaning and look for positives in the difficult experience, to acknowledge experienced difficulties, to increase closeness with others, and to be more confident in handling difficulties (see Wood et al. 2020 for all leader behaviors and their corresponding measures). When military leaders engaged in these behaviors, their soldiers experienced lower levels of post-traumatic stress and depression, and higher levels of benefit finding and unit cohesion. Thus, leaders can drive personal and unit PTG by encouraging deep reflection and meaning making. The

rapid rotation of leaders in most military units often means the leaders can bring their own PTG to the service of their new units, bolstering their resilience. In our example, John showed such transfer as his growth from his experiences as a company commander changed how he approached the preparation of his unit as a battalion commander.

SUMMARY

Since the al-Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States has had to confront various national security challenges in addition to a panoply of natural and human-manufactured disasters. The work of first responders and the military is vital in these endeavors, which most often involve teams. National security as well as disaster responses hinge on the effectiveness of teamwork. Team effectiveness in these instances depends in part on how viable the team is and whether it can maintain its viability when environmental and contextual challenges increase during threat, danger, and stress. Team viability depends upon high levels of cohesion, trust, and efficacy. *In extremis* conditions can impair a team's cognitive, social, and emotional processes, which in turn can negatively affect cohesion, trust, and efficacy. Leaders have several strategies at their disposal to help them build team viability and foster cognitive, social, and emotional team resiliency in dangerous circumstances.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Leaders and organizations interested in building resilient teams need to acknowledge the following points:

- Dangerous contexts can break down the bonds holding teams together if they are not strengthened early and consistently in the team's development.
- Tough, realistic training (as well as thinking through and discussing alternative scenarios) inoculates teams against the negative effects of stressors from dangerous contexts. They also help facilitate team cohesion, trust in one another, subsequent viability and resilience, and post-event growth.
- If stressors (across the cognitive, social, and emotional domains) are not addressed and transparently communicated early in a team's developmental cycle, they may negatively influence individual and collective team performance during an action phase, and may also hinder the post-event recovery process.
- Honest and transparent after-action reviews are critical in discovering what aspects of an event were executed incorrectly and in facilitating the individual, collective, and institutional learning required to ensure similar mistakes are not repeated in the future. Such reviews can also help the team develop resilience and initiate PTG after dangerous events.
- Post-traumatic growth has no specific timeline; some team members may experience nearly immediate development, while others may require a significant period of reflective time to process and learn from the event.

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CHAPTER 12

Morale
A Force Multiplier

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During the "crack wars" of the 1990s I was assigned to the 015th District serving the Austin community on the city's far west side. The police station was built in the 1920s. When it was identified for demolition, the community demanded the station remain open, and it was spared. Unfortunately, there was no money in the budget to maintain it. So it was cold in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer. Electrical power often failed, and telephone service was intermittent. Had it not been city property, the building would have been condemned. It was affectionately called "Fort Forgotten" by those who worked there.

What the district did not lack for was violent crime. Though it was a small geographic area, the district was among the highest in crime, especially murders and shootings. The 015th District was selected to be among the first to experiment with a new strategy called "Community Policing" in response to the escalating violence driven by street gangs and crack cocaine. The intent was for the police to be more responsive to the community's concerns. The number one call for service in Austin was open-air drug markets. They operated twenty-four hours a day and served hundreds of customers from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa who could drive in on the expressways and be served within minutes with the efficiency of a McDonald's. Local street gangs controlled the locations with deadly force.

Crack cocaine gave users a more intense high because it was smoked in a pipe and delivered a powerful rush to the brain. When crack hit the market, customer demand increased dramatically. The reverse sting operation was developed to reduce this problem. Plainclothes officers would take control of a designated drug spot—identified by citizens' complaints and recent armed violence—and sell lemonhead candy packaged to look like crack cocaine. Surveillance determined what time the spot opened, the

location of its armed security, and where the seller had stashed the drugs. A controlled purchase verified whether the drugs were real. Drug dealers were arrested, and illegal drugs and weapons seized.

There were several benefits to this tactic. First, it gave some respite to the besieged community, and bystanders often applauded as suspects were taken to the prisoner transport. Second, information was collected on who controlled the drugs and recent armed violence. Third, vehicles were impounded to prevent out-of-towners from returning. Lastly, judges offered a suspended sentence to those who participated in a drug rehabilitation program.

On the day of the 015th's annual Christmas party, seven members of the unit were indicted on federal charges of conspiracy to commit robbery and extortion of undercover officers—an ironic variation of the reverse sting. No supervisors were indicted, and rumors were rampant. Unit morale was destroyed.

The next morning, we were scheduled to conduct a reverse sting. I spoke to the lieutenant, whom I had known and respected for years. He said we should go ahead with the plan. I let out a long breath of air and said, "OK." Walking into the roll call room was like entering a wake, but worse. No one made eye contact; all were looking at the floor. Absolute silence, unlike the usual roll call behavior. I began with the statement that we were doing the reverse sting. Every eye looked up at me, some silently expressing, "You got to be kidding." I calmly continued reading off all the assignments and concluded with, "Get some coffee, and meet me at the scene." We completed the initial roundup of gang members without incident and were waiting for transportation when one of the prisoners turned and asked, "Where are you guys from?" Every officer froze and waited for my answer, "We're from Austin." He laughed and said, "We thought you guys would take some time off." "No," I replied. "We were the police yesterday, we're the police today, and we'll be the police tomorrow."

The worst had just passed. We were a unit again with a mission and purpose. Unlike what you see on popular media, police work is not all car chases and gunfights. It requires a lot of paperwork, and it was going to take hours to complete all of it. By the end of the day, I saw some smiles and other indicators of morale. It would take time, but this was a first step. I looked for the lieutenant to thank him for keeping me focused. His reply was simple, "I thought it was the right thing to do."

That was it! The essence that defines leadership: "Doing the right thing." The source of both mission accomplishment and morale. Dangerous situations are full of such ethical and moral challenges. It may take months, even years, to develop good morale, only to lose it because of an unethical, immoral, or illegal episode. Leaders set goals as well as the moral compass. They share the dangers and are present at friction points to ensure that tasks are done correctly. Morale is perishable and must be nurtured every day.

INTRODUCTION

CURRENT RESEARCH ABOUT MORALE points to an important and defining characteristic of this phenomenon, one that is especially critical to those who find themselves in organizations operating in a high-threat environment. Specifically, morale has been found to be motivating, leading to perseverance and presumably success at group tasks, especially under trying circumstances.[1] Morale is potent when external challenges exist—challenges defined by difficulties, danger, high stress, and adversity. The defining characteristic of morale is that it is a "force multiplier"; that is, high morale has a positive impact on performance, and low morale has a negative impact on performance. The police unit, which had previously enjoyed a high level of morale working in a dangerous assignment, was devastated by the criminal indictments of their fellow officers. The leader had to take immediate action to address their fear and guilt.

The moral component of "doing the right thing" resonates and legitimizes our endeavors. Good leaders understand this and build their emotional bond on this knowledge. J. R. R. Tolkien, a veteran of World War I, was deeply affected by his war experiences. His *Lord of the Rings* trilogy is in essence a tale of doing what is right and good regardless of the challenges. More to the point, the bonds of fellowship describe what good morale feels like for those who have honorably served. As leaders we make choices, and they have consequences.

The U.S. Army Air Corps members who flew combat missions in World War II were well known for their high morale. Their duty had some of the highest risk of death, even higher than for ground troops. During their numerous bombing runs against the German war machine, these combat missions took off from England and flew across enemy-controlled territory within enemy-controlled airspace, often in daylight. The airmen who flew these missions knew that their chance of survival was miniscule, yet they continued to fly and continued to have high morale. These results contradicted perceptions of common sense. Certainly, they were unusual in having volunteered for the Air Corps after they were inducted into the Army. They tended to be better educated overall, viewed their unit as elite and their missions as directly contributing to the war effort; and they were viewed by others as superior because of their selection and skills training.[2] While these were all contributing factors to their overall success, it was their morale that allowed them to fly day after day with incredible results.

Each air crew was unique and distinctive, and their close relationships made them better able to handle the dangers, stress, and adversity of repetitive daylight bombing missions into enemy territory. Like the police officers in Austin, however, the bomber crews were devastated by the combat losses suffered in the Schweinfurt-Regensburg raid on August 17, 1943. There are numerous Hollywood accounts of this period, including *Twelve O'Clock High* (1949) and *Command Decision* (1948) starring Gregory Peck and Clark Gable, respectively, portraying the real-life Gen. Curtis LeMay. Both movies examine the leadership challenges to get men back into those airplanes to fly the next day. Though a

highly trained and experienced group, the airmen felt the same pangs of fear and guilt after 22 percent combat losses. As volunteers, they were self-selected for their task; and their mission was relevant, purposeful, and important. But morale cannot be taken for granted. Leaders at all levels must work to maintain the positive impact on their crews' performance. Leadership by example. Leading from the front. Making tough and sound decisions to get the job done right. The stuff of books, movies, and legends. It is not easy, but leadership in such situations can be mastered.

Implicit in the notion of morale, particularly as the term has been used in military organizations, is the idea that high-morale groups are especially likely to perform more effectively than low-morale groups when confronted with severe obstacles and adverse conditions.[3] The current nature of war indicates that units operating outside of the larger forward operating bases (or "outside the wire") are the only forces capable of causing military members to expose themselves consistently to enemy fire. The same can be said for police, fire, and other law enforcement organizations in their relevant contexts. The confusion, danger, hardship, and isolation of the modern battlefield have intensified the reliance on the small group to which that soldier belongs. While there is no "iron framework" to assert the importance of one factor over another in assessing the individual and unit performance of these groups, the impact of morale on group effectiveness in terms of courage, discipline, enthusiasm, and willingness to endure hardship is clear.[4] It is impossible for the military to function, particularly during highly stressful and demanding missions, without support, trust (see chapter 10), unity, and esprit de corps at the small-unit level.[5] No doubt there are many reasons why a unit or organization performs well (or poorly) under stress. Undeniable, though, is the importance of morale as a key variable that influences both motivation and performance.

WHAT IS MORALE?

What is morale? At face value, this seems like an easy question with a simple answer. However, there is a vast amount of research and literature in the different disciplines of social science that offers different perspectives. Although behavioral scientists have long used the term "morale," few agree exactly what it does or should mean. As described by various authors, morale seems to be a complex construct that includes a vast array of attitudinal, motivational, and social predispositions. It is more general than concepts of motivation and satisfaction that appear in psychology literature and encompasses major elements of both concepts as well as the notion of group cohesiveness.[6]

"Morale" is a French word that entered common use in the mid-1700s. Originally meaning morality or good conduct, the word soon came to mean confidence and was applied to military forces.[7] As used today, morale is a cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance toward the goals and tasks of a group. It subsumes confidence, optimism, enthusiasm, and loyalty as well as a sense of common purpose. Morale entails how one thinks and feels about the group's task, mission, and purpose, which greatly impacts the group's motivation

to perform, especially in dangerous environments. Morale is an indicator of both group and individual well-being.[8] For our purposes, we will remain focused on group morale. While an individual's morale is certainly relevant to the overall morale of the unit or organization, the larger issue is how the group's (two or more people) morale impacts organizational effectiveness in a high-threat environment. Most groups of sufficient size can sustain good morale even with a handful of alienated or disgruntled members.[9]

Components of morale include confidence, enthusiasm, optimism, capability, resilience, leadership, mutual trust and respect, loyalty, social cohesion, common purpose, devotion, sacrifice (selfless service), compelling history, honor, and moral rightness. The components form a continuum, not "have or have not," but rather to what degree. Morale and its components are desirable, but they are also valued because of their presumed consequences for the group and its members: perseverance, courage, resilience, and, of course, success.[10]

The police officers in the opening vignette clearly exhibited these outcomes in a very stressful situation; they persevered in a difficult situation and were resilient despite setbacks. They followed the leader they trusted despite the blow to their morale and the uncertainties. The trust bonds forged through shared hardships during tough, demanding training and real-life situations enabled the police officers not merely to survive but to thrive. They held each other in high regard, with mutual respect and trust. During the events described in the vignette, the officers went back to work in the same dangerous situations because that defined who they were: the police, serving and protecting the Austin community. Success bred success, which in turn contributed to higher morale and increased unit performance. Each component of morale manifested itself in this group,[11] thereby resulting in very high morale and increased group effectiveness. Table 12.1 summarizes the key interpersonal and organizational factors that impact morale.

TABLE 12.1

Interpersonal and Organizational Factors Impacting Morale

Morale Is Impacted By	
Trust between leaders and members	Member selection
Respect	Mission clarity, purpose, and moral rightness (task cohesion)
Tough, realistic training to enhance capabilities, which boosts confidence	Sufficient material resources
Past successes; emphasizing the organization's past history	Positive, caring leadership
Strong social relationship based on respect and loyalty (social cohesion)	Sacrifice for the good of the group (selfless service)
Honorable performance of duty	Optimism about the future
Commitment to excellence	Devotion to the cause

CULTURE AND MORALE

In August 2017 I was privileged to assume command of the storied 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), the same unit portrayed in the acclaimed HBO miniseries Band of Brothers. Every Army unit has a history, yet the history and lineage of Easy Company, 2-506, is arguably one of the best known in the Army. The World War II veterans of Easy Company became household names as the world learned about their extraordinary exploits. The members of Easy Company developed a strong bond through shared difficult experiences. They rallied around their regimental motto, "CURRAHEE!" as they ran up Currahee Mountain in Toccoa, Georgia, multiple times a week, "3 Miles Up, 3 Miles Down!" Veterans of Easy Company credit the difficult training they endured together for their many successes on the battlefield. Each man knew he could trust the paratrooper next to him with his life because of the strong loyalty, respect, and bond formed in training.

Easy Company during World War II had strong junior leaders who held the company together and always embodied the highest levels of standards and discipline. Maj. Dick Winters became the company commander of Easy Company on D-day and led the unit through the end of the war. Winters was a natural leader, and the strength of his leadership and character, which permeated throughout the unit, is what many of the veterans credit with the unit's success from D-day to Operation Market Garden to the Battle of the Bulge. At every crucible event, the shared discipline, trust, and loyalty, combined with strong leadership, helped them seize the initiative and overcome the most difficult situations.

Today, soldiers arrive at 2-506 keenly aware of the unit's history and lineage, and proud to continue the legacy of what the veterans of World War II began. As the commander of 2-506, I leveraged the history of the unit to build the same level of esprit de corps demonstrated by those veterans. We too rallied around the motto "CURRAHEE!!" at every opportunity. We took an annual trip to Toccoa, where we reconnected with living veterans of the unit and always took the opportunity to run Currahee Mountain. At the beginning of our quarterly long road marches, I would remind the unit of the time in the early 1940s when the 2-506 marched from Toccoa to Atlanta in a record-setting seventy-five hours. We were proud to continue to build upon the legacy. Training proficiency was high. Trust and loyalty were high. Soldiers wanted to stay in the unit, and our retention stats showed it. Soldiers in 2-506 held their heads high and were proud to be in the unit.

Renowned social psychologist Edgar H. Schein's classic definition of culture may be said to refer to the deep structure of organizations; it is rooted in the prevailing assumptions, norms, values, customs, and traditions that collectively, over time, have created shared individual expectations among the members. Meaning is established through socialization to a variety of identity groups that converge in the organization's

operations. Culture includes attitudes and behavior about what is right, what is good, and what is important, often manifested in shared heroes, stories, and rituals that promote bonding among the members. It is, in short, the "glue" that makes organizations a distinctive source of identity and experience. Thus, a strong culture exists when a clear set of norms and expectations—usually a function of leadership—permeates the entire organization. It is essentially "how we do things around here."[12] Morale is at the very core of organizational culture. In order to assess and affect morale, leaders need to begin with an understanding of the immediate climate and long-term culture of the group they are leading.

A unit's high or low morale can often be traced to the strength of its culture. For positive morale to be internalized and ingrained in the very fabric of the unit, the culture of the organization needs to be one that promotes, promulgates, and supports a high-morale environment. Before a leader can affect the morale of the organization (either the unit morale or the personal morale of its members), he/she first needs to assess it. In the vignette above, Dick Winters and the recent commander of 2-506 were fortunate in being part of a high-functioning-morale unit. A high-morale environment like the one described in the preceding story and consistent with the factors outlined in table 12.1 is an environment where leaders set the example and support the parent organization's goals and values. In a high-morale unit, subordinates identify and internalize the unit's goals and values such as discipline, mission readiness, and high performance and conduct. Just as in the vignette above, high morale manifests itself in unit success, high retention, and shared mutual trust.

All three levels of culture—artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions—must be congruent and consistent with respect to what the institution is promoting (see chapter 16 on shaping culture).[13] At the surface is the level of artifacts, which includes all the phenomena one sees, hears, and feels on encountering a new group with an unfamiliar culture. Artifacts include the visible products of the group, such as its architecture; its language, technology, and products; its artistic creations; its style, as embodied in clothing, manner of address, emotional displays, and myths and stories told about the organization; its published list of values; and its observable rituals and ceremonies. The most important point about this level of the culture is that it is both easy to observe and very difficult to decipher. In the case of the unit above, the artifacts, both historic and recent, all support a high-morale environment. Veterans of the historic Band of Brothers all described a culture rooted in trust and a strong camaraderie developed over shared experiences. The underlying culture of high morale and high discipline led to mission success on the battlefield.

The second level of an organization's culture is its espoused beliefs and values. High-morale units espouse beliefs and values that stress loyalty, competence, affiliation with the primary group, discipline, and trust.[14] All group learning ultimately reflects someone's original beliefs and values, their sense of what ought to be as distinct from what is. Beliefs and values at this conscious level will predict much of the behavior that can be observed

at the artifacts level. However, if those beliefs and values are not based on prior learning, they may also reflect only "espoused theories," which predict well enough what people will say in a variety of situations but may be out of line with what they will do in situations in which those beliefs and values should be operating. If the espoused beliefs and values are reasonably congruent with the underlying assumptions, then the articulation of those values into a philosophy of operating can serve as a source of identity and core mission to help bring the group together.

Not every unit or organization has the "luxury" of a famous historical lineage to rally around and build on. Leaders and commanders need to continually assess their organization's culture through examining the visible artifacts. If these artifacts start to become incongruent with the unit's values and espoused beliefs, then change is needed. The U.S. Army teaches and values loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. The artifacts in the Band of Brothers unit, both historic and recent, indicate that the Army is an organization that values discipline, trust, leadership, and physical and mental toughness, all fostering a culture of high morale.

To get at the deepest level of cultural understanding and to predict future behavior correctly, we must understand the culture's basic underlying assumptions. When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis supported only by a hunch or a value gradually comes to be treated as fact. We come to believe that nature really works this way. Basic assumptions have become so taken for granted that one finds little variation within a group or organization. This degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values. In fact, if a basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. Therefore, basic assumptions can be thought of as the implicit, core assumptions that guide behavior, that tell group members how to perceive, think about, and feel about things.

Basic assumptions tend to be nonconfrontable and nondebatable, and hence are extremely difficult to change. To learn something new in this realm requires us to possibly reexamine and reconstruct existing paradigms as we learn something new. The role of leadership is especially critical to the successful reexamination and resurrection of basic assumptions. In the first vignette, the commander has to determine if the basic underlying assumptions of his unit are functional or dysfunctional. Because the artifacts in both the historical and recent unit all paint a picture of strong espoused beliefs and values, it is vital that the commander determine whether this strong culture has permeated throughout the entire organization, and if so, how to continue to maintain it. The recent commander of 2-506 in the second vignette recognizes that the culture is already strong and therefore only needs to be maintained. He takes efforts to maintain the strong culture through continued tough and realistic training and tying all events back to the historical unit to continue to build upon an already strong legacy. The commander continues to rally the unit around the unit's motto, "CURRAHEE!" and develops a culture in which the unit's

TABLE 12.2
Indicators of High Morale

Indicator	*Example*
Mission clarity and purpose	Soldiers in 2-506 held their heads high and were proud to be in the unit.
Consistent success	At every crucible event, the shared discipline, trust, and loyalty combined with strong leadership helped them seize the initiative.
Mutual respect	They knew they could trust the paratrooper next to them with their life because of the strong loyalty, respect, and bond formed in training.
Strong leadership	This leadership is what many of the veterans credit with the success of the unit from D-day to Operation Market Garden to the Battle of the Bulge.

members do not want to do anything that would be detrimental to the legacy of the many heroes who served in the unit prior to them.

Culture is to a group what personality or character is to an individual. Closely associated with an organization's culture is its climate. In contrast to culture, organizational climate refers to environmental interactions or behaviors rooted in the organization's value system, such as rewards and punishments, communications flow, and operations tempo, which determine individual and team perceptions about the quality of working conditions. It is essentially "how we feel about this organization." Climate is often considered to be alterable in the near term and largely limited to those aspects of the organizational environment of which members are aware. Unit culture allows for high morale to exist. Good unit culture creates the conditions for good unit morale, and vice versa. In the second vignette, there are several key indicators that highlight the high morale in this unit (see table 12.2).

The Band of Brothers vignette is an excellent example of a strong culture leading to mission success and high morale. The tough and demanding initial entry training the unit endured at Toccoa was a formative event for each original member of the unit. Discipline, physical and mental toughness, and loyalty to each other became visible artifacts that defined the unit. These artifacts were congruent with the espoused beliefs of a strong underlying culture. High mission readiness, high mission success, high retention, and pride in the unit were all outcomes of high morale.

When you are assessing the morale of an organization, table 12.1, which enumerates the factors impacting morale, is a good place to start. There are some intuitive indicators in a unit that will lend themselves to these factors and the determination of whether morale is high or low. Table 12.3, which focuses on basic member needs and one's sense of belonging to a group, offers another perspective on assessing unit morale.[15]

TABLE 12.3
Assessing Morale
Members identify strongly with their unit when the unit satisfies their major physical, security, and social needs.

A High-Morale Unit:
1. Provides adequate food, water, medical support, rest, and essential supplies and weapons.
2. Is the primary social group for the individual and controls his/her day-to-day behavior.
3. Provides the major source of esteem and recognition.
4. Provides a strong sense of mutual affection and attraction among unit members.
5. Provides the member a sense of influence over events in his/her immediate unit.
6. Causes the member to identify strongly with immediate unit leaders at squad, section, platoon, and company levels.

BUILDING HIGH MORALE

In 2006 I was scheduled to return to Iraq. Previously during 2004–2005 I had deployed south of Baghdad with a Marine Reserve infantry battalion to an area known as the "Triangle of Death." At the end of that tour, the battalion's morale was remarkably high, a credit to the leadership and the Marines who adapted to an evolving and violent insurgency. The most important weapon was our Marines, who were permitted to use their innovation, discipline, and determination. They succeeded in their mission by moving out of larger forward operating bases (FOBs) to establish smaller company and platoon bases closer to the local population. After some analysis, the battalion established a mantra: "We know who you are. We know where you sleep. We hit harder than you do. We never forget."

The casualties during the first three months were staggering, a dynamic that is always hard on a unit's morale. Fortunately, the battalion had a solid core of veterans from previous deployments. They knew there was no such thing as "presence patrols." Combat and reconnaissance patrols yes, but a "presence patrol" is just a scheduled target. Every battalion operation requires a task, purpose, and end state. Lacking specific intelligence, these operations provided only the certainty of more casualties without the benefit of harming the enemy.

A key to success was locating local heroes who had the will to fight. We set out looking for such individuals who possessed the intelligence, ambition, endurance, charisma, and ruthlessness necessary to fight al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Without such allies our mission would continue to fail. It would take months before we located two such leaders: Fallujah's new police chief and a local tribal sheik.

These relationships began the change to our operational approach. Now we were the hunters and AQI the prey. We provided aviation in direct support and employed our drones to confirm targets identified by Iraqi patrols. Targets were prosecuted by forward air controllers (FACs) using Iraqi interpreters. There was pushback on the first day, but it soon became standard procedure, with devastating results.

The entire Marine sniper platoon was deployed into Fallujah occupying mutually supported positions. The boxes were selected by the Iraqis, but the snipers chose their locations. On-call aviation, artillery, and a dedicated quick reaction force (QRF) all supported the local Iraqi police and militia. Sniper operations are always dangerous, but the platoon was never tagged during months of urban operations.

Other combat innovations included making the civil affairs (CAG) team a primary collections asset working in close liaison with human intelligence exploitation teams (HET), and teaming the radio reconnaissance element with scout snipers. The entire targeting process was compressed to less than sixty minutes thanks in large part to the judge advocate general's (JAG) ability to rapidly authorize lethal force. Additionally, company intelligence cells mapped the human terrain and drove the targeting process. A lot of talented individuals worked together with a single goal: defeat AQI in Fallujah.

The enemy was now on their heels and needed to respond. Their plan was to drive a wedge between us and our allies, particularly the police chief and the sheik. They selected a pair of suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) as their weapon. On March 16, 2007, a truck laden with explosives and chlorine gas was driven to the sheik's home village. The explosion released a large cloud of chlorine gas that quickly spread into the village. There were many civilian casualties. Our medical personnel immediately responded and saved many lives. Sadly, those who died were the young and old, their lungs unable to resist the effects of the chlorine gas. However, the terror attack had the opposite effect of what was intended; it galvanized the people against AQI. The wedge was now between the people and AQI.

A second chemical VBIED was detonated outside the Iraqi military barracks at the Fallujah Government Center on March 28, 2007. Marines on perimeter engaged the dump truck as it crashed the checkpoint. There were many casualties but fortunately no deaths. Al-Qaeda never took credit for either of these attacks, a silent confirmation that their gambit was a mistake.

"Dark," our local sheik, was killed by a suicide bomber January 15, 2013. He had survived numerous attacks on his life. He was a good friend and loyal ally. He earned our respect and made the ultimate sacrifice. There is a long history of the critical role of leadership in such fights. Morale flourishes when participation and innovation are encouraged. There is no such thing as the perfect plan. Operations are measured by events, not the clock, and determined by people, not metrics.

In organizations that habitually operate in dangerous environments, good morale is enhanced by extensive training, sufficient material resources, and the sheer nature of the threat or scope of the task. Also contributing to military morale are good leadership, mutual trust and respect among group members, a clear mission, perceived public support, past combat success (unit history), and low casualty rates. Military units with low turnover rates tend to have higher morale, as do units where members expect a lengthy time in the unit.[16] Those in the military do not fight for their flag or their country as much as for their brothers and sisters who share a trench with them.[17]

The actions of the Marines in Fallujah in the preceding vignette illustrate leaders' impact on morale, which cannot be underestimated. In fact, most research on this subject suggests that morale is best predicted by variables suggesting engagement in meaningful work and confidence in unit functioning and leadership.[18] The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) sometimes refer to morale as their "secret weapon." The IDF's soldier surveys have found a high level of morale since the force's early years.[19] How do units and organizations achieve this level of morale, which in turn allows them to be successful in environments characterized by stress, uncertainty, and danger?

The IDF surveys identified two variables most strongly associated with both personal levels of morale and company morale: perceived unit togetherness and relationship with commanders.[20] With respect to the former, collective efficacy is the belief that individuals hold concerning their group's ability to successfully perform its tasks. Collective efficacy comprises a soldier's experience; the leader's tenure, competence, and experience; the leader's confidence in the group; unit discipline; and members' identification with the unit.[21] Of these characteristics tested within the IDF, the strongest predictor of perceived combat readiness was the unit member's identification with his/her company. A strong sense of belonging and shared beliefs and attitudes reinforce the trust members place in each other and in their leaders. Additionally, the tenure of the leaders and the experience of the soldiers increased perceptions of readiness, as did the level of discipline in a unit. Experienced formations have confidence in their skills and abilities. Leaders understand the value of discipline and the impact it has on readiness and resultant morale. Therefore, the greater one's belief in the unit's ability to conduct the mission, the higher the individual's and unit's morale. This belief is positively impacted by a member's identification with the unit. Table 12.4 outlines leader behaviors that result in specific morale-enhancing outcomes to build up each factor.

The IDF surveys found that both individual levels of morale and the unit's morale were significantly correlated with the degree of confidence in the battalion commanding officer and in the company commanding officer.[22] In high-threat environments, the soldier finds that his/her very survival depends mainly on the actions of the more immediate leaders. Other factors that directly impact morale (as influenced by the leader) are confidence in

TABLE 12.4
Leader Behaviors that Build Morale (Outcomes)

Leader Behaviors	*Outcomes*
Continuously improve competence, demonstrate honesty and integrity, protect and promote group members' welfare, share hardships and experiences, conduct tough, demanding, realistic training; create opportunities for social/team-building events.	Trust in one another and confidence in unit leaders
Institute a holistic training program—physical, mental, skill specific, etc.	Experienced leaders and subordinates
Establish and enforce high standards. Ensure leaders model the standards at all times. Communicate to group members why it is important to adhere to the standards.	Discipline
Instill pride in the unit and a sense of its history.	Identification with the unit and its history
Trust and empower group members, share information, and participative decision making.	Positive, cooperative, and interdependent relationships among group members

oneself, team, and weapons. For the Israeli soldier, his combat team, his weapon, and his sense of competence may frequently be determinants of his own survival on the battlefield—the higher his confidence in these factors, the higher his morale, and hence his combat readiness. In general, individual morale is characterized by "a sense of well-being based on confidence in self and in primary groups."[23] It follows that the impact on group morale is positive.

The group leader is responsible for developing the self-confidence of his/her subordinates as well as fostering the subordinates' confidence in the leader. A leader can take specific steps to build such confidence; training, shared hardships, developmental exercises, and the like are a few examples. Equally critical, if not more important, is the leader's direct role in high-threat situations. The Marine leaders in the previous vignette had earned the confidence and trust of their subordinates via their actions at the decisive point of a high-stress event. In turn, they built and created an environment of high morale and a benchmark for successful counterinsurgency operations months after "all had been reported lost." Table 12.5 shows the leader behaviors most relevant in a dangerous situation.

TABLE 12.5
Leader Behaviors to Build and Sustain Morale in a Dangerous Environment

To build and sustain morale in a dangerous environment a leader should	
Take charge	Remain calm to make good decisions
Bring a sense of control	Remain focused
Give direction	Be a steadying presence (model confidence)
Inspire subordinates	Deal in optimism
Share leadership (empowerment and participation)	Be loyal and look out for group members' safety
Maintain unit integrity on missions	Provide resources needed for success
Share dangers and hardships by leading from the front	Perform missions in a moral and ethical manner
Ensure the organization continues to learn and improve	Be honest and transparent with group members
Communicate, explain, and live the shared values	Engage in selfless service

CONCLUSION

Morale matters, especially in environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. Morale is a "force multiplier"; that is, high morale has a positive impact on an organization's performance, especially in a high-threat environment. Leaders can harness this "X factor" to enhance unit performance. Unit organizational culture directly impacts unit performance in high-threat environments through the actions of leaders. Leaders have a responsibility to build high morale by developing their own proficiency and displaying confidence in themselves and others. Detailed knowledge of potentialities and the current mission is also critical. Individual expertise and the promotion of strong unit cohesion couples with these characteristics in the formation of high unit morale. A unit organizational culture that fosters high morale may result in high levels of unit performance in high-threat environments.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Morale is embedded in the very culture of an organization. An organizational culture that fosters a positive, values-based framework will facilitate high unit morale.
2. Leaders have a direct role in assessing and building morale. Leadership is critical in creating the conditions for high morale, both prior to immersion in a hostile environment and in the hostile environment itself.
3. In a high-threat situation, leaders can impact morale by their specific actions on the ground during the crisis. There is no substitute for the positive direct actions of the leader.

NOTES

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6. Maguen and Litz, "Predictors of Morale."
7. Peterson et al., "Group Well Being."
8. Peterson et al.
9. Peterson et al.
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11. Moral rightness is the least obvious component in this vignette. Moral rightness is exemplified in the Marines' belief in the goodness of their mission and what they were doing.
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CHAPTER 13

Leading in Uncertain Times, Challenging Contexts, and Where Leadership Really Matters

BRUCE J. AVOLIO AND HAROLD SCOGGINS

THE MAIN GOAL OF THIS CHAPTER is to examine the readiness of leaders to lead their teams and organizations through the extreme events that are increasingly impacting our organizations and institutions. Building leader and follower readiness requires continuous attention and a plan for developing the various types of leadership that are required to successfully address events that are novel, risky, and difficult to predict. We suggest that what you have learned as a leader earlier in your career will not be sufficient to address the challenges you will face as you move through the remainder of your career.

In the past year, Chief Harold Scoggins had to lead the Seattle Fire Department (SFD)—and in many instances the community—through the uncertainties and risks associated with the "novel" COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic was unfolding, many of the fire services' employees were also deployed on the front lines dealing with the rising incidence of drug overdoses as well as the emergence of movements seeking social justice. Although Chief Scoggins says that his thirty-plus years of service did provide him with a foundation of experiences to address these events, he admits that there were many situations new to his experience as well.

In line with being developmentally ready to deal with those challenging situations, Chief Scoggins was one of the main founders of the SFD Leadership Academy, which had fourteen different agencies and their senior leaders participating in a two-year leadership intervention to ready their organizations and themselves for the anticipated and unanticipated challenges they would face in the future. At an early Leadership Advisory Board meeting, a former SFD leader positioned the focus on developing readiness by asking those present to consider a simple question: *If there were no more fires in the future, what could we do as fire services to be ready to serve our communities?* The simple

answer, which we will expand on in this chapter, was to work at building each leader's developmental readiness to explore, learn, and experiment with a broader range of possible challenges, and to be open to doing so both individually and collectively.

Avolio and Hannah introduced the concept of individuals' developmental readiness with regard to assuming and performing leadership roles more than a decade ago.[1] Although they did not establish a link between leader developmental readiness, extreme contexts, and the type of leadership that was required to be effective, they discussed two main areas that should be examined when determining if an individual is ready to develop and engage in leading others: (1) individuals need self-awareness, and (2) they need developmental efficacy—a motivation or desire to learn how to lead. In this chapter we examine how leaders' different identities, logics, values, and styles of leadership position them to be more or less developmentally ready to lead in uncertain and challenging times/contexts. Our overarching goal is to examine how leaders' readiness to lead and the context in which they operate result in sustainable performance for leaders and their units operating in extreme contexts.

Indeed, given the novelty, higher risk, and unpredictability of many of these emerging challenges, the best way for leaders to prepare is to continuously focus on exploring new avenues and approaches to leadership development, just as Chief Scoggins did, while experimenting with those new approaches. To be developmentally ready as a leader means being motivated to explore and learn, being able to motivate others to learn, and then collectively developing the capabilities that seem to work based on testing and experimentation. Leadership must be continually developed and practiced over time as the conditions that may cause harm change and evolve.

We start our discussion with one key requirement for leading in challenging times: leaders need to adopt a more *incrementalist* perspective. This frame of reference is characterized by viewing one's capabilities and motivation as *not being fixed* with respect to how one can address unexpected extreme events. To successfully lead in complex and dangerous situations, leaders and those they lead must be able to develop, adjust, and adapt by learning how to respond quickly and effectively to such situations/events.[2] And that requires a high level of readiness in their *developmental efficacy/confidence.* With higher levels of developmental efficacy leaders and their teams can master the specific developmental milestones required for them to address extreme events/challenges, especially those that impose risks that have not been addressed in the past.

Developmental readiness includes an individual's self-beliefs that he or she *could* and *should* develop to address and adapt to unexpected threats and challenges.[3] These self-beliefs can foster a greater level of *self-concept clarity* (SCC), which entails building a deeper and clearer understanding of one's capabilities and motivation, which then brings into sharper focus the individual's identity, values, beliefs, behaviors, and positive psychological resources. These psychological resources can include individuals' positive attitude toward engaging in new training, their level of hope and optimism

about discovering better ways to address unanticipated challenges, their confidence to try new approaches, and their ability to bounce back with resilience when they fail, and then try again. These psychological states can vary as situations change and can also be developed to help leaders to better address the range and depth of challenging events they are facing or will face in the future. Consequently, in terms of the motivation aspect of developmental readiness, these psychological resources are critical in determining whether leaders and their organizations will be successful in preparing for future extreme events.

Leaders and followers who are clear about who they are and what they can learn can confidently explore how they can predict and address future challenges. Focusing on this aspect of leader development, Hannah and Avolio noted that "leaders can use patterns of thinking and emotions that are open, positive, and learning oriented, which facilitates new learning; or leaders can engage in maladaptive reflection, such as ruminating over the negative aspects of an otherwise successful experience."[4] Leaders who do the latter stifle both their energy and that of others, as well as their ability to adapt and change their ways of thinking, behaving, and performing. Leaders' degree of developmental readiness, that is, can either contribute to or detract from their followers' readiness, as well as that of their organizations. Leaders whose "clocks have stopped" in terms of learning new methods and models will diminish their followers' readiness, thus lowering the team's ability to adapt to meet new challenges posed by extreme events. These psychological resources should not be referred to as "intangibles"; they are very tangible resources for helping leaders and their organizations adapt and adjust to dealing with extreme events.

We propose that leaders and followers who develop a higher level of SCC will be more capable of accelerating their self- and collective leadership development to address extreme contexts because they will have a greater capacity for processing a broader range of developmental and performance information with which to master new levels of expertise.[5] "Self-complexity," Hannah and Avolio note, "will particularly facilitate leader development across a myriad of contexts through enhancing the ability of the leader to differentiate and integrate new knowledge of the self."[6] If that self-complexity becomes a fixed frame of reference, leaders will likely fail to recognize significant changes in the situations they confront, which can inhibit their leadership development and effectiveness. To the leader who constantly remarks, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," we suggest that if it ain't broke now, it might be the next time you confront it.

In a six-month-long study of U.S. Army military cadets, Hannah and Avolio found that cadets' developmental readiness to lead moderated their mastery of two forms of complex leadership—transformational and authentic—as well their level of leader efficacy, or confidence to lead others.[7] Higher levels of capability on each could position cadets to address more extreme contexts after graduation, such as leading soldiers into combat.

APPLICATION OF LESSONS LEARNED

- Fostering the frame of reference and enhanced readiness of leaders to assimilate new experiences and knowledge can enhance their readiness to take on unexpected challenges and extreme events.
- At the center of leadership development is the leader's self-concept, which is the "bucket" in which he or she stores and organizes identity, values, beliefs, and other psychological resources. This bucket can be continuously replenished, thus positioning the leader to assimilate a broader array of new knowledge and strategies for leading more effectively.
- The leader who perceives his or her self-concept to be fixed and unchangeable will find it harder to be agile and adaptive in new situations. For example, as organizations become more diverse, leaders will find that the values and beliefs of individuals from different cultural backgrounds will vary, and those values and beliefs can impact how receptive they are to their leader's decisions and requests.
- Members of some cultures expect a more directive leadership style, while others may expect to be involved in how decisions are made.

BRINGING THE CONTEXT TO THE FOREGROUND

We continue our analysis of leadership in extreme contexts by first discussing the events that create the need for different approaches to leadership, as opposed to starting with models and styles of leadership. Context is crucial in determining the type of leadership particular situations require. Avolio called for leadership research and practice to focus on examining how the context influences leadership, and vice versa, instead of simply considering the context as a contingency to be considered in the planning process.[8] (See chapter 10 for how context impacts trust development.) By aligning the demands in the context with our concept of what constitutes leader developmental readiness, we seek to evaluate how challenging the context is in terms of the required competence, motivation, affect/emotions, decision making, and psychological states required for a leader to be effective. Our intent is to "stretch" our leadership models into newly defined spaces where we can determine if the individual has the capacity and motivation to lead effectively when called upon to address extreme challenges.

We suggest that as the context becomes more novel, risky, and unpredictable, the leader's understanding of the challenges will influence the type of leadership to be explored, learned, and then reliably deployed. Higher levels of complexity in the situation also demand higher levels of readiness in the leader to effectively address the demands he or she will face. One of the ways to get individuals ready to lead is to enhance their developmental readiness to operate successfully in a broad range of extreme contexts through training, simulations, direct experience, and/or experiences shared among leaders.

Developmental readiness, like a financial investment, needs to be grown by promoting its compound interest over time through investing in developmental feedback and building a sufficient level of practice.

Context Is a Key Antecedent to Leader Developmental Readiness

How leadership is both construed by the leader and perceived by others depends on the historical, social, cultural, task, and interpersonal context in which the leader is acting. We therefore view effective leadership as representing a unique relationship between the leader's ability, motivation, and style with respect to the demands associated with the context in which the leader operates. In terms of the characteristics of the context, we view these as potential demands that the leader and followers must ultimately recognize and develop themselves to address. These demands can dramatically alter the type of relationship the leader must build with followers and superiors in order to be effective.

For example, in any dangerous context, particularly after an extreme event has occurred, safety will move to the foreground as the leader makes decisions about life and death where the potential harm to others exceeds acceptable limits. The contextual challenges leaders and followers face are intertwined with the demands placed upon them and how both parties engage in navigating those challenges based on their respective levels of developmental readiness. If leaders understand the reasons for approaching an unanticipated challenge in a novel way but followers do not see the logic, then the organization is less developmentally ready. A very clear example of this discrepancy was shown during the early phases of the pandemic across different communities and nations. In some cases, the leaders realized they had to operate differently but their organizations and communities were not developmentally ready to do so. In Taiwan, on the other hand, both the leaders and the followers were developmentally ready to address COVID-19 because they had dealt with the SARS pandemic less than twenty years earlier.

Application of Lessons Learned

- To understand a leader's readiness to take on various challenges and extreme events, we focus on the historical and current contexts in which the leader and followers are expected to engage and how that context may unpredictably change over time. The demands being placed on the police services, for example, have been changing as public sentiment has shifted on what is the mission of police services and what tactics are allowable to accomplish it. In some situations, mental health teams are replacing police units as the front line of defense in addressing individuals experiencing a mental health crisis.
- A leader's readiness, or lack thereof, can significantly impact how he or she characterizes the context in which extreme events may unfold, reducing the leader's effectiveness.

- Leaders can learn a lot from previous extreme events and the challenges faced and overcome, but their roles and expectations should also evolve along with changing times. Successful strategies that worked in the past may no longer be effective.
- In the fire services, leaders now have to deal with a much broader range of challenges than simply putting out fires. Fire services in communities across the country are increasingly being called in to address homelessness, drug abuse, and overdoses, as well as collaborating with the police and many other services in addressing the complaints coming from social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter.

EXAMINING CONTEXTS THROUGH THE LENS OF EVENTS SYSTEMS THEORY

The Event Systems theory of Morgeson, Mitchell, and Liu provides a very useful framework for examining extreme events, some of which "can become strong enough to produce change or variability in behaviors or features and can lead to subsequent events."[9] Events are signals that can both trigger the leader's attention and place limits on the decisions and behaviors the leader and the unit can enact. For example, the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020 triggered the massive Black Lives Matter movement for addressing social injustice in American society; but it also introduced limits on the types of interventions police officers might consider using in uncertain or risky situations. An unfolding and cascading process such as this one can rapidly lead to subsequent events as a consequence of the leader's state of developmental readiness, choices, and actions in the early phase of the extreme challenge. Decisions made at that time resulted in subsequent challenges and decisions that had to be faced.

The Event Systems model focuses on events characterized as being *novel*, *disruptive*, and *critical*, and examines how these categories of events trigger different types of "shocks" to be addressed, such as injury to a teammate and the need to replace that person to move forward.[10] With respect to our focus on extreme contexts and events in this chapter, a basic question that needs to be asked is whether leaders and followers are developmentally ready to navigate these shocks, and whether they also have the personal resources to sustain their efforts until they have completed their work and addressed the challenges.

Returning to our discussion of the *incrementalist* perspective, leaders can develop a level of self-complexity and a corresponding frame of reference that can be limiting or supportive as they navigate through various shocks and challenges. You can think of leader self-complexity as representing the sophistication of the models and methods available to the leader in terms of what he or she will then choose to do as novel, risky, and unpredictable situations arise.[11] The least complex leaders will have a very fixed mindset with a limited repertoire of strategies they can deploy in addressing extreme events. A greater degree of complexity provides a greater range of choices for the leader to choose from to address these events. The frameworks these leaders develop for use in addressing future shocks

and challenges will reinforce the use of new strategies for addressing them. Research has shown, for example, that greater self-complexity makes military members more adaptable in complex situations.[12] These frameworks become part of the leader's self-concept and help to shape how the leader responds when addressing subsequent challenges. What is critical here is that the leader remains open to expanding his/her self-concept and frame of reference of what constitutes desirable and undesirable choices and decisions. Being fixed in one's thinking and self-concept as extreme events change is a recipe for disaster.

Our Collective 2020 Shock

In 2020 the world experienced a collective shock that profoundly impacted our social, economic, educational, healthcare, government, community, and family systems. How developmentally ready was the world—both leaders and followers—to navigate the events that unfolded in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and are we now better prepared to address the events still unfolding? Our answer to this existential question is that we simply don't know. We do know that some countries have fared significantly better than others in terms of their mortality rates, Taiwan and New Zealand among them. In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, one of the youngest national leaders, was able to eliminate new COVID-19 cases. Her efforts, along with those of other New Zealanders, limited the number of COVID deaths to 26 out of a population of nearly 5 million. In Taiwan, President Tsai put in place protocols for the entire population of 25 million, and only 10 deaths were recorded.

Other first world countries with comparable if not better resources to combat COVID-19 had dramatically higher mortality rates, including the United Kingdom, United States, Russia, and Sweden. Consequently, we should seek to understand how the context and leadership were different in these countries.

As mentioned earlier, the leadership in Taiwan had been called upon to address the SARS epidemic twenty years earlier and was able to repurpose many of the protocols that were deployed then. They still had to adapt and execute the 2020 strategies effectively, but the general population already had some protocols and frames of reference that had been successful earlier. This was generally not the case elsewhere in the world, where SARS had a minimal impact on mortality rates. We also should not underestimate the impact that trust had on the challenges of dealing with the SARS pandemic and note that trust in government institutions today is at a low point worldwide.[13]

In sum, their past experience with SARS certainly had an impact on how countries like Taiwan, Singapore, and Korea addressed the new pandemic threat. Will the same be true for other countries that have now experienced the COVID-19 pandemic? Will they learn from the current pandemic and codify the knowledge for future use? That will depend in part on the developmental readiness of their leaders to learn from this pandemic and apply the lessons learned to interpret the risks associated with any future pandemic, which of course may pose completely different risks.

Perhaps you observed that the two countries we held up as examples were both led by women. Interestingly, a study of mortality rates from COVID-19 showed that countries led by women tended to fare much better with respect to their mortality rates than those led by men. One could argue that these country-level differences were at least partly due to the more *communal* orientation of female leaders versus the *agentic* orientation associated with males.[14] Agentic qualities such as assertiveness and being dominant tend to be aligned with prototypes of male leaders, whereas female leaders are more communal; that is, they show greater levels of empathy and understanding for others and thus tend to create greater levels of trust in followers.[15] These greater levels of empathy and understanding may have provided a higher level of assurance to various populations with respect to adopting the strategies the leaders used to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Badura et al. suggested that the social complexity of the context moderated whether a communal style was more effective than an agentic style.[16] Communal styles promote affiliation and harmony, which may have served the leaders of Taiwan and New Zealand better as they implored their populations to work together to stamp out the pandemic by bending or flattening the curve of new cases. Communal leaders advocated actions such as staying home, social distancing, wearing masks, and being more attentive to compliance standards tied to science-based standards.

In a similar study conducted in the United States, Sergent and Stajkovic found that the states led by female governors had fewer COVID-19 deaths than states with male governors. The sex of the governors also coincided with seeking earlier stay-at-home orders. Female-led states asked their citizens to shelter at home to reduce the spread of the virus and to work together to accomplish this goal as a community.[17]

Sergent and Stajkovic also analyzed the governors' regular public briefings regarding the pandemic and found that female governors expressed greater levels of empathy for their state's people and had confidence in the importance of working together to keep everyone safe. The authors quoted comments such as: "I am confident that by working together and sharing our best ideas, we will be more likely to get it right." "Throughout this crisis, I have been having regular Zoom calls with various essential workers across our state. I wanted to thank them, and I wanted to listen to them and ask them what I can do to help them."[18] Perhaps individuals prefer a communal style when the context and events create greater levels of uncertainty and risk. Such a preference could have resulted in higher levels of compliance with safety protocols and lower mortality rates.[19]

Of course, neither of the studies cited above showed a cause-and-effect relationship; many other variables could explain or at least contribute to the different success rates, a phenomenon scientists call "endogeneity." Endogeneity represents potential unaccounted-for variables that could also explain the results that were observed in these two studies beyond the sex of the governor and his or her agentic or communal style. Nevertheless, there seems to be sufficient evidence to suggest that leaders need to master both styles of leadership to address future crises more effectively.

Let us return to Morgeson and colleagues' Event Systems theory, which states that "events thus reflect discrete, discontinuous 'happenings,' which diverge from stable or routine features of the organizational environment."[20] This contextual theory specifies that events occur in a certain time period and situation where they result in a *change*, *imbalance*, or *disruption*, depending on the nature of the event. One key aspect of the event the model addressed was that it was novel, prompting individuals to seek to understand how it happened and then determine the appropriate range of responses to address it. The higher the degree of novelty associated with an event, the more likely the event will change how each individual chooses to address and learn from that event, which, we would add, will be based on their level of developmental readiness.

A second characteristic of the event described in the Event Systems theory entails how critical the event appears to be for the leader, which relates to the risk associated with the event and the priority the leader assigns to dealing with it. Critical events, such as the historic BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which took months to cap due to the depth of the wells, are more likely to motivate leaders to conduct a broader and more in-depth analysis of "what is or has happened," which can result in the individual choosing different options and/or exploring new ways of handling those events in the future. The severity of the event and the damage it causes can motivate a substantial change in the individual's behavior to the degree that a previous style or orientation toward leadership was unsuccessful.

Mischel referred to the "strength" of events, whereby a "weak" event might be associated with the old rules that did not work and had to be abandoned.[21] A weak event may be followed by a period when leaders have to figure out a completely different way of addressing unexpected and potentially dangerous events. They will do this more effectively if they are developmentally ready and open to considering these new perspectives. Having a higher level of leader self-complexity helps!

In contrast, in "strong" situations, the existing rules are clear and more easily applied to the current challenge. Taiwan's leaders may not have seen the COVID-19 event as novel because they had already faced the challenges associated with the SARS pandemic. Countries like Sweden and the United States, where SARS had a relatively minor impact, were in a much "weaker" situation when COVID-19 arrived. Why? The last major global pandemic had occurred more than a hundred years ago, so the leaders of these countries were unfamiliar with the lessons learned from prior extreme events and had to address COVID-19 as a novel situation.

Extreme events can vary in terms of their magnitude and duration, and in how the magnitude and duration impact an organization—or in the cases above, entire countries.[22] Clearly, the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic has tested the fiscal, operational, and psychological resources of societies at every level from federal to individual. But what have we learned from this collective crucible event that could position our leaders and organizations to address the next event, whether it be a human-made or natural disaster? We have seen how threats to society such as the 9/11 attacks on the United States

triggered subsequent events and changes in the way we live and work—changes that are still unfolding. We have certainly learned a great deal in terms of security issues, but has that knowledge produced the requisite leader complexity and readiness to address the next set of unanticipated extreme events?

We can conclude from our overview of Event Systems theory and our analysis of extreme contexts that there are qualitatively different impacts that result from extreme events in terms of when they occur, where they occur, individuals' proximity to the extreme event in terms of risk, and the short- to long-term nature of these threats as they unfold over time. As Geier pointed out, given the potential impact of these events, it is surprising that "extreme contexts are one of the least researched areas in the leadership field."[23] This leads us to ask what we do know about developmental readiness and the type of leadership style required to successfully address various extreme events/challenges.

Application of Lessons Learned

- We examined what constitutes an event and, more important, extreme events, and how those events can impact leaders and their followers. We also looked at the type of learning that can occur that positions leaders to deal more effectively with similar events in the future.
- We explored how different leaders approach these extreme events, and in particular compared male and female leaders. Women leaders are in general characterized by a more communal style of leadership that tends to use more empathy and understanding in dealing with the consequence of these events than men leaders use. Women also were firm in sticking to protocols they advocated and believed would work against COVID-19.
- The lessons learned from so-called weak or highly uncertain situations, where the old rules don't apply, suggests that leaders will need a much higher level of developmental readiness to address these situations prior to and during their occurrence in order to expand their frame of reference of how to deal with the next series of extreme events.

EXAMINING LEADERSHIP IN EXTREME EVENTS

Starting with the simplest style of leadership, one might ask whether being directive or being participative is more effective when dealing with extreme events. For example, should leaders focus on being effective transactional leaders, where they provide clear directives, goals, and metrics to gauge what constitutes success? Alternatively, participative leadership may be more effective when dealing with extreme events because being a role model and sacrificing one's own safety for the benefit of others inspires others to do the same.

How does the leader's authenticity in the eyes of others position that leader to successfully address these disruptive events? Does the authentic leader's transparency, high ethical standards, or fairness enhance followers' level of trust and increase their willingness to assume greater risks or hardships? Geier examined leadership in the fire services, an environment where extreme events are more likely to be experienced. In this context, "the well-being of followers may be at stake and the leader's behavior may increase or decrease the risk to their well-being, making proper leadership style in an extreme event imperative."[24]

Most of the systematic research on extreme events has been conducted in the military, either in simulated or live combat situations.[25] The results typically showed that balancing leadership styles seemed to produce the most effective performance outcomes. The combination of knowing followers' needs and capabilities, challenging their thinking, inspiring them to achieve a sufficient level of extra effort, and being a role model—all of which are associated with the transformational leadership styles described in more detail below—tends to yield the best results in more extreme contexts. Baran and Scott reported that in the fire services it was important to continuously improvise, adjust, and revise how events were addressed to be most effective, a flexibility that again requires the leader to be high in developmental readiness.[26]

At the same time, followers engaged in extreme events will look to leaders to use proper planning, establish clear standards, take control, set specific objectives, and monitor their behavior for any deviations that could cause harm to themselves and others. Demonstrating their competence to address the complexity of the unfolding events also contributes to successful performance in those extreme contexts.[27] All of these qualities and actions represent agentic styles of leadership and, depending on the context, can be highly effective. Indeed, in his field study Geier found that an agentic transactional leadership was viewed as the most effective leadership style.[28] This will usually be the case where there is little time for debate and consultation, and it falls upon the leader to set the course and act based on his or her judgment of what is required to address the situation. Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger displayed agentic leadership when he landed U.S. Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River—against the advice of the airport controllers—when the plane's engines failed. Captain Sullenberger had actually trained other pilots on this very risky and complex maneuver, and his experience told him it was the best option for survival. The fact that everyone on that flight survived supports his decision.

In sum, these findings demonstrate the general lack of consensus in the field of leadership research with regard to the leadership styles that are more or less effective in addressing extreme events and point out the need for further and broader studies. As the range of extreme events broadens to include environmental disasters, cyber and biochemical warfare, nuclear disasters, and threats from outer space such as asteroids, leadership research and practice is a wide-open field.

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND MODELS

Below we examine several different orientations/styles of leadership that are relevant to how leaders and followers engage and perform in extreme contexts. We first focus on transformational/charismatic leadership and show how it affects followers' perceptions of extreme situations, applying Shamir, House, and Arthur's motivational theory, which links the leader's style of leadership to the follower's self-concept.[29]

One of the core propositions in transformational and charismatic leadership theory is that the leader transforms followers so that they consider the needs, aspirations, and interests of their group rather than focusing solely on their own self-interest.[30] Shamir et al. argued that such leaders affect the value their followers place on their mission, raising the mission's importance and priority for followers while also increasing their motivation, trust, and confidence to successfully address the challenges they face in achieving their mission.

Transformational and charismatic leaders thus induce followers to sacrifice for the good of the mission, motivating them to perform beyond the call of duty. Shamir et al. found that charismatic leaders shift followers' values, goals, needs, and aspirations so that they transcend their own self-interest and place the success of the mission ahead of their own security and safety. This shift represents a change in followers' self-concept as well as their motivation. The followers' self-concept and identities are linked to their motivation and are fostered by transformational and charismatic leadership.[31]

Stryker suggested that individuals' identities are organized into hierarchies, and a specific identity will be higher or lower in the hierarchy of an individual's self-concept at any particular moment.[32] The identity's place in the hierarchy is linked to the context or challenges being confronted, where the context represents an opportunity to express that identity.

For example, a mother traveling on a plane with her children may be looking forward to a relaxing week at the beach with her family. Yet the moment the pilot opens the intercom and announces a medical emergency at the front of the plane and requests immediate medical assistance, the mother, who is an ER physician at a trauma unit, shifts to her professional identity and understands that the person will live or die depending on what she does in the next two minutes. As we go through our days and lives, we often shift from one identity to another, and part of being developmentally ready is having the ability and motivation to do so.

As noted above, transformational and charismatic leaders can affect their followers' identities so that collective interests and goals become more prominent and important to them, which would make the success of the group's mission more relevant in terms of expressing their identity. For example, many firefighters in New York City on September 11, 2001, went up the stairs in the World Trade Center when the building was about to collapse, even after their commander told them to evacuate, because their ethos and identity dictated that firefighters do not leave citizens in harm's way. Many of them died when the building collapsed.

By investing effort into achieving the mission and developing followers' self-esteem and confidence, transformational and charismatic leaders give their followers an opportunity to reinforce their identity through self-sacrifice and motivate them to meet and succeed in addressing extreme challenges and events. Such leaders are also able to increase followers' faith in the mission and its importance, which enhances their confidence that they can succeed in addressing extreme events. Because they are acting in alignment with their self-concept and identity, followers are more capable of creating a greater level of self-consistency and meaningfulness, which then supports the mission and the adoption of the roles and behavior necessary for its success.

In sum, Shamir and colleagues found "charismatic leaders achieve transformational effects through implicating the self-concept of followers. . . . [S]uch leaders increase the intrinsic value of efforts and goals by linking them to valued aspects of the follower's self-concept, thus harnessing the motivational forces of self-expression, self-consistency, self-esteem and self-worth."[33] The transmission of these effects can occur through leaders' role-modeling of what they expect from followers, or through how they frame the challenges their followers face.

The way leaders frame the interpretation of events provides followers with the opportunity to label challenging situations in ways that can mobilize their efforts and performance and also derive meaning from their challenges.[34] Framing occurs when the leader references values used to justify why the mission is important, the importance of the followers' collective effort, and the mission's historical precedents. Followers are likely to emulate a leader who is able to act as a role model. In this situation, there will be a greater level of consistency between the leader and followers' self-concepts as well as the actions taken on behalf of the overall group. The increased sense of efficacy, together with higher levels of commitment to the mission, will produce higher levels of motivation among followers, resulting in better performance.

These transformational effects on the follower are more likely to occur in the weak condition described by Mischel.[35] In weak situations, there will be a wider disparity in terms of expectations concerning what is required to achieve the performance goals associated with the mission. A higher level of ambiguity associated with the context can make it easier to appeal to and engage followers' self-concepts, values, and identities. A leader who realizes that what worked in the past will not work in the present situation will be motivated to explore different ways of leading and acting.

In weaker conditions, the leader will likely define the context for followers in line with the mission they are trying to achieve on behalf of their organization. This can come in the form of *exemplification*, whereby the leader engages in behaviors such as self-sacrificing or risky actions to demonstrate commitment to the mission.[36] As Shamir et al. explained, "the leader provides an ideal, a point of reference and focus for followers' emulation and vicarious learning."[37]

Once a collective identity is formed between the leader and the followers, the followers will behave more as a unit than as a collection of individuals. The transformational and

charismatic leader's behavior activates the followers' self-concepts, and those in turn trigger the level of individual and collective motivation that can result in accomplishing the mission.

Gardner and Avolio described transformational and charismatic leaders as individuals who thrive on creating meaning for others and motivating them to higher levels of effort to pursue their mission.[38] They suggested that leader and followers jointly construct their identities for different situations, and that these situational identities build a "theory of the self" that connects not only the leader to the followers, but also each member of the team to the mission.[39] These reciprocal effects on each party's identity can also be magnified based on how conducive the context is for motivating collective effort, as is often the case in extreme contexts.[40]

What do transformational leaders do to activate these changes? Below we list the four *I*s of transformational leadership.

Individualized consideration: The leader gets to know the abilities, needs, identities, and values of followers and works to develop the followers into a successful team. Individuals get a lot of personal attention and support from leaders to advance their development.

Intellectual stimulation: The leader challenges followers' beliefs about who they should be and how they should address emerging challenges, motivating them to pursue different strategies and approaches that can effectively address extreme events.

Inspiring motivation: The leader energizes followers to stretch themselves to levels of motivation and performance that heretofore they felt were beyond their reach. The leader supports this increased motivation by modeling the motivation and behavior they expect from their followers.

Idealized influence: The leader establishes the group's core values, ethical standards, and red lines of acceptable and unacceptable behavior to provide clear guidance to all of the followers and stakeholders on what they aspire to achieve as an organization.

In combination, the leader, follower, and context can enhance the internalization of followers' values and identity in service of the collective interests of the group. Leaders who display high levels of self-confidence, trust, and challenging performance expectations can enhance the confidence and trust among their followers and energize them to exceed performance expectations.

Application of Lessons Learned

- Shifting followers' perspectives to consider the group's needs over their own self-interest creates the conditions for units to work toward the collective mission of the organization.
- Leaders need to model and exemplify the values and beliefs they hope to see in others, especially where the leaders and followers are not in direct contact with each other.

- Each individual creates his or her own set of identities, which can have common elements in a unit or organization and help to foster a higher level of alignment and collective identity and effort.

HOW DO LEADERS SHAPE THE CONTEXT/EVENTS?

LePine et al. examined how charismatic leaders influenced followers in U.S. Marine Corps units in their assessments of different types of job demands/stressors.[41] The authors examined two types of stressors, which they defined as hindrance and challenge stressors. The challenge stressors were hypothesized to have a potentially positive impact on personal growth, development, and well-being; while hindrance stressors were more harmful and threatening to an individual's well-being and development.[42] Crum et al. proposed that leaders can foster followers' tendency to perceive challenge stressors as being more positive for development and can also mitigate the negative effects of hindrance stressors.[43] How? Sometimes leaders can link success in their prior experiences to a new and emerging extreme event to build their self-confidence. Likewise, they can show how followers learned from past extreme events, as we described the Taiwanese leadership doing, and apply those lessons learned to dealing with a new crisis and extreme event.

As we noted above, transformational leaders shape the self-concept, identity, and feelings of followers and how they perceive challenges and stress, as well as how each contributes to individual, unit, and organizational performance. When followers see stressors as diminishing the "resources" they have available to accomplish their task, charismatic and transformational leaders can redefine the task to reduce its negative aspects and impact on their followers. In line with Hobfoll's conservation of resources theory, people seek to build, protect, and retain their personal resources (e.g., their level of positivity, confidence, or hope), which can be threatened in times of stress. Apparently, leaders can help followers preserve those resources by the way they describe and engage followers in the challenges that must be addressed during times of stress.[44]

The core argument is that transformational leaders can enhance positive follower reactions to challenge stressors while also buffering the negative reactions to hindrance stress factors. LePine et al. reported that transformational leaders augmented the positive effects of challenge stressors on job performance by strengthening the link between the perceived challenge stressors and perceptions of justice.[45] Individuals so influenced had a clearer idea of the right thing to do and how to go about doing it to be successful.

LePine's research was conducted in a military context, where extreme events are more likely to occur.[46] Two field studies with Marine units revealed that stressors were positively related to performance to the same extent that the group rated leaders on transformational and charismatic leadership, and that this style of leadership also mitigated the effects of hindrance stressors on job performance, but not necessarily how followers viewed those hindrance stressors.[47]

Application of Lessons Learned

- Transformational leaders can motivate followers to very high levels of performance by shifting followers' identities to align more closely with the collective mission of their group or organization.
- Leaders provide the frame of reference and lens through which their followers will see and interpret extreme events and what they are willing to take on in terms of the inherent risks associated with these contexts.
- Leaders can adopt different styles depending on the nature of the extreme events to be addressed, and greater leader self-complexity is important to such adaptation.
- Different styles of leadership can be more effective depending on the nature of the context in which they are being enacted.

LINKING AUTHENTIC, TRANSACTIONAL, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP TO EXTREME CONTEXTS

Since the late 1990s the field of leadership research has expanded its focus beyond the simple transactions of providing direction, goals, feedback, and rewards to include how the authenticity of both the leader and followers can provide the foundation upon which other positive leadership styles are built. In this section, we describe additional orientations toward leadership that include characteristics of the leader and follower, as well as the context in which their engagement is enacted. The reader should come away with a broader range of leadership styles and perspectives that can be deployed depending on the challenges their unit or organization is facing.

Authentic Leadership

We first discuss authentic leadership as the "root" construct of all forms of positive leadership.[48] Authentic leaders are motivated to enhance their own and followers' self-development through four unique components of leadership: they are highly self-aware about their leadership; they have internalized a moral and ethical perspective/standard; they are balanced and judicious in processing information to make decisions; and they promote a higher level of transparency in all of their relationships.[49]

Authentic leadership is relational in nature, because the leader builds authentic relationships with followers.[50] Authentic leadership is also positive, because the leader focuses on building followers' resources in the form of psychological capital (PsyCap—hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism), with an expectation that the combination of these factors can positively influence follower outcomes.[51]

Self-aware leaders have knowledge of their own attributes, needs, motives, feelings, and values, and are aware of how they influence others.[52] They understand and accept themselves and know their strengths and weaknesses, and they are open to feedback and

willing to adjust how they lead others. Authentic leaders have *internalized moral standards* that regulate their behavior, such as being motivated to do the right thing, which aligns with the high ethical standards of transformational and ethical leadership.[53]

Authentic leaders seek to be judicious and *balanced* in considering different perspectives/ideas before making judgments. They actively seek out different perspectives, motivating others to challenge how they think, process, and make consequential decisions.[54] Their willingness to listen to others makes them appear more fair in how they handle difficult situations.

An authentic leader's *relational transparency* is shown by his or her interactions with others in a way that reinforces them to display their true emotions, motives, thoughts, and intentions.[55] Although there is clearly overlap in these four core component dimensions, as well as with other positive forms of leadership, empirical studies have demonstrated that each of them has unique aspects.[56]

How do followers react to authentic leadership? Followers of authentic leaders come to identify with their leader's ethical/moral perspective, balance, fairness, and transparency. They have higher levels of trust in their leader, as well as positive exchanges that enhance their motivation and job performance.[57] Authentic leadership contributes to followers' sense of belonging while also satisfying their essential need to feel a strong connection to others, and to be competent and capable of accomplishing their tasks and addressing extreme challenges.[58]

Psychological capital, or PsyCap, comprises the individual's self-efficacy (confidence), optimism, hope, and resilience,[59] factors that are crucial to performing in times of stress, adaptation, or challenge. There is a direct positive relationship between authentic leadership and follower PsyCap, and also between follower PsyCap and performance.[60] Individuals draw on their psychological capital when they need to deal with stress, adaptation, or challenge over long periods.[61] In sum, there is a direct positive relationship between authentic leadership and follower PsyCap, and between follower PsyCap and performance.[62]

Optimistic individuals expect good things to happen in the future and attribute success to internal and stable factors.[63] Authentic leaders' balanced processing of information helps followers to frame their opportunities for success more objectively, thus promoting a higher level of realistic optimism.[64] Authentic leaders' promotion of transparency in their relationships will motivate followers to assess both threats and opportunities more accurately, which should also increase their level of optimism when dealing with extreme events.[65]

When individuals are more hopeful, they believe they have the capability to control their situation and are motivated to seek pathways through which to address difficult goals and challenges.[66] Transparency is an important part of that process because informed followers can seek more pathways to mission success in extreme contexts. The authentic leader's balanced processing invites followers' input into decisions, which can contribute to increasing their self-efficacy (confidence) to take on and address challenges, resulting in a higher level of the "willpower" element of hope.[67]

Resilient individuals believe that they have the resources required to recover, or bounce back, from setbacks. That in turn can reduce the level of risk they associate with the challenge they are facing and increase their felt ability to face similar challenges in the future. The positive social relationships they have formed within their group enhance that belief.[68] Followers of authentic leaders become comfortable sharing the risks they perceive in doing their work and are more likely to disclose the nature of those challenges while also soliciting the leader's support and advice or asking for more resources. This level of transparency facilitates a more effective exchange of information that is essential when addressing novel and risky extreme events.

Authentic leaders promote their own high moral and ethical convictions and standards to their followers, which reinforces followers' understanding of the right thing to do in various contexts. This style of leadership also helps followers to bounce back from adversity.[69] In sum, there is empirical evidence establishing the positive relationship between authentic leadership and follower PsyCap.[70]

Application of Lessons Learned

- There are many different styles that a leader can deploy in dealing with extreme events, and learning the impacts of each style is essential to successful leadership in extreme contexts. Leadership is knowing which style is needed in each situation.
- Each leadership style can be configured to address risky and unanticipated events, so leaders again must be developmentally ready to "try on" different styles to develop themselves to be more effective and complex leaders.
- All of the effective leadership styles can be learned and successfully applied across a broad range of contexts and events.

BUILDING A CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS SELF-INITIATED LEADERSHIP

Organizational culture is "a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interactions."[71] Schein described these cultural mechanisms as the means that leaders use to embed their beliefs about how they hope their followers think, feel, and interact with others in their organization.[72] Schaubroeck studied U.S. Army soldiers operating in combat zones and found that these embedding mechanisms, which are shared by organizational members, create an alignment between the followers' ethical choices and their leader's values and beliefs.[73] See chapter 16 for an in-depth discussion of organizational culture.

Communication between leaders and followers is difficult for units operating in extreme contexts, but the members of these units must know what their leader's intentions are regardless of whether they are in direct communication with their leader. When the

leader's intentions are built into the organization's cultural mechanisms, units can align around the core values to get their tasks done and exercise self-leadership (see chapter 14 for tools leaders can use to shape an empowered culture).

Leaders who develop a self-leadership culture create a *tight-loose* connection in terms of the articulation of their standards, values, and beliefs, while also reinforcing that the unit's members have the discretion to make decisions and choose the actions they deem appropriate for the context in which they are operating. In such a self-leadership/empowerment culture, unit members can strive to be independent in terms of their decisions and actions when needed, but collectively are guided by their leader's and organization's core values, beliefs, and assumptions.

Leaders influence surface-level attributes within an organization's culture in the way they interact with and treat their followers, which then reinforces how their followers interpret and rely upon the cultural mechanisms to promote the desired culture for their units.[74] A surface-level attribute might be the day-to-day attention a company places on safety and avoiding near misses. The cultural mechanisms then reinforce all members of the organization seeking to avoid near misses that can increase the rate of preventable accidents. The cultural assimilation process provides a common basis for unit members to collectively think, feel, and act in concert with the leader's expectations, especially when operating on their own. Schaubroeck et al. found a direct relationship between a leader's actions and the cultural norms and guidance embedded in his or her unit's culture, which then provided guidance for follower decisions and actions at the levels of U.S. Army battalions, company units, and platoons.[75] These cultural norms included, for example, the humane treatment of civilians in countries such as Iraq and the willingness to report infractions of this norm to officers.

The type of self-leadership culture we have described above for operating in extreme contexts represents a prosocial orientation, whereby members of the unit are motivated to contribute to its performance above and beyond simply satisfying their own needs and expectations.[76] Each individual's actions are geared toward benefiting the unit or larger organization as a consequence of the identity and culture that a leader has developed within the unit. This type of collective identity creates a feeling in followers that *the organization's success is their success*, and they become more willing to sacrifice their own needs and self-interests for the benefit of their organization. This level of collective identification also creates a greater level of self-efficacy and engagement, in that members of the organization realize they are all working toward a common mission, which can increase their agency for raising their performance levels.

Bracht et al. described the similarities between the self-leadership culture developed as described above and a serving culture, which is "characterized as a work environment in which participants share their understanding that the behavioral norms and expectations are to prioritize the needs of others above their own and to provide help and support to others."[77] A self-leadership culture promotes empowering others in terms of reinforcing

the individual's competence and determination to make choices that are in line with the values and beliefs of the organization.[78]

By promoting a more empowered and self-determined organizational culture, the leader motivates followers to assume a higher level of autonomy in determining the courses of actions that need to be pursued. The stronger the alignment between what the follower determines to be the right course of action and the organization's culture, the more authenticity followers will attribute to the organization's culture. The level of authenticity is based on the degree of consistency between the individual's internal values and his or her external actions—"the unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise."[79] In sum, a self-leadership culture not only motivates a greater level of self-determination, it also reinforces a higher level of authenticity to the extent that unit members operate in line with the leader's and the organizational culture's beliefs, values, assumptions, and desired actions.

Based on the identity theory discussed earlier, each person's self-concept comprises multiple role identities that encompass the roles they occupy at work.[80] A single person might hold identities as fireman, battalion chief, public spokesperson, and father, depending on his various work and personal roles. The role identities represent self-definitions that we all use to guide how we behave and engage others. These identities are tied to our expectations and social norms, which create the behavioral guidelines we follow in terms of how we think, decide, and act.[81] Individuals define specific role identities for themselves and then apply them to how they adjust their attitudes and behavior to the various demands and challenges they face in their work and broader life contexts. The role identity an individual invokes at a given time largely determines the actions she or he will take within and between different situations and constitutes the reasons for doing so under high-risk, adverse situations.[82]

Depending on leaders' effectiveness in creating and reinforcing a self-leadership culture, individuals consider which role identities are relevant based on the links to the organization's mission and culture. Consequently, individual attitudes and behavior in daily work are likely to be determined by organizational role identities, which in turn are shaped by the leader and culture. Moreover, as individuals become more proficient at enacting these role identities, they also become more confident in the work they are tasked to accomplish.

Application of Lessons Learned

- A significant part of any leader's job is to work toward embedding and reinforcing the core values and beliefs that represent the organization they serve. The inculcation of these values in units occurs through role-modeling those values, reinforcing the behaviors that align with those values and beliefs, providing feedback to others where there isn't alignment, and through the development process.

- Self-leadership needs to be developed and reinforced when individuals are operating in extreme contexts, because in many situations they will be operating on their own, where their tether to their leader is through the values, beliefs, norms, and expectations characterizing their culture, along with the leader's intentions.
- Self-leadership does not mean that everyone gets to do what they want, which only results in a higher level of conflict and disorganization. To the contrary, self-leadership is driven by very powerful "internal" guideposts that offer leaders and their units a clear line of sight into what constitutes the most appropriate courses of action when dealing with the most difficult challenges.

A REAL CASE OF EXTREME LEADERSHIP AND CHALLENGES FACED BY CHIEF SCOGGINS

Over the course of my thirty-year career as a firefighter I have been conditioned to face crises that demand real-time decision making. I have responded to structure fires, wildland fires, traffic collisions, scenes of violence, earthquakes, floods, and probably most other emergencies one could imagine. However, 2020 was unlike any year I have experienced as a fire service leader.

In January 2020 our organization learned that a novel coronavirus was spreading in our region that would impact our response model on how the fire department delivered service to the community. As more information about the novel coronavirus was revealed, we knew the impacts would be significant, not just for Seattle but for Washington State and the nation as well. When we saw how this disease devastated a local convalescent facility in Kirkland, we understood that we were dealing with an extreme event that could impact our entire community.

By the time a pandemic was declared nationally, we were already in the process of changing our policies, practices, and procedures. I knew that to be successful these changes would need to focus on safety, be intentional, be clearly communicated and reinforced, and be frequently evaluated. It had been more than a hundred years since the last pandemic, so there was no one with actual experience to help us design our response. Our initial actions during the beginning of the pandemic made it clear how fast we would need to operate over the next several months, and perhaps for a year.

We knew the first several months would be critical for our success or failure as a fire service in our community. During this unfolding and uncertain period, I knew it would be important to focus on the safety of our firefighters as we continued to serve the community. This required taking intentional steps to communicate as we worked to change polices in real time. I also understood this pandemic would require a different approach from our day-to-day leadership and management practices. By design, our standard practices take time to establish. Our goal is to allow for many

stakeholders to have the time necessary to review, research, and offer edits or inputs to our policies. We understood that during the pandemic our traditional practices would not allow for sufficient flexibility for us to address the necessary decisions to be made in a timely manner.

Early on, I knew my leadership abilities would be tested by the challenges we were facing. I also knew that through the many and diverse experiences life had offered me I had developed the skills to build coalitions, motivate others, inspire trust in myself and my organization, and communicate transparently. I would need all those skills to address one of the most extreme events that our nation, and the world, had ever faced. During the first several months of the pandemic our organization transformed into a nimble and flexible large organization that could rapidly pivot in this changing environment.

Our organization was just getting our legs under us to manage the COVID-19 pandemic when a tragedy occurred on May 25, 2020. The murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer was captured in its entirety on video, and it was immediately clear to me that it would have a very significant impact on our community. The incident touched off protests locally, around the nation, and eventually around the world in the following days. Most Americans had a very significant reaction to watching the life drain out of this black man.

I knew our fire services organization would be tested, as well as the trust for public safety. Over the next several weeks, our organization worked hard to support the many individuals in our community who were exercising their First Amendment right to protest. In the extreme environment that we were supporting, I knew our past and present ethical behavior and the trust we had built over decades would be judged as never before. The protest environment continued to evolve to become more disruptive, eventually coalescing in an area occupied and held by the protesters.

I knew this was one of those critical moments when I needed to be present, seen, and heard. Over the next few weeks my traditional role as a firefighter adapted to the environment I now entered. I once again drew upon many experiences and character traits that had become so important in my development as a leader. These included having the ability and patience to listen and understand a diverse range of views, to communicate very intentionally, and to walk in with humility and be empathetic; all helped guide my path during one of the most challenging experiences I had faced.

The situations mentioned above were not the standard fire and life safety events the fire department generally responds to or manages on a daily basis. Both events were very extreme in different ways and tested our capabilities to adapt rapidly to a changing environment. Our leaders had to lead from the front and communicate with clear intent.

Application of Lessons Learned

- The chief of Seattle's fire services demonstrated how important it was to be *developmentally ready* to be able to address the complex emerging extreme events and challenges that confronted the community.
- Early on, Chief Scoggins realized that the old routines were not going to work in addressing these emerging and "weak" situations. The rules had changed, and the leadership would have to change as well to address new challenges. The chief had to learn quickly what might work and what wouldn't work, and to apply what he learned in real time while convincing others to follow his lead.
- His organization and its leadership had to be prepared to address these events as well, and that is not something that just happens; it occurs over time and is based on the residual trust one has built to be able to ask the people you lead to change, sometimes in the moment, from what they learned in the past to be the "right way" to lead others. There was nothing comfortable about this past year, and many of the rules of engagement had to be challenged and changed quickly.
- Chief Scoggins realized that he had to be visible to his organization's members and to the community's citizens. To be an effective leader he had to spend very long days trying to understand and address the protesters' demands while keeping the city safe at the same time.

Much of what Chief Scoggins said in his account of that challenging year relates to the points we have raised throughout this chapter regarding the different styles and orientations of leadership. We highlight some specific examples of his leadership below.

- He was very self-aware of how he could apply his past experiences and leadership style to emerging extreme events and challenges. These included developing relationships and coalitions to address some of the challenges facing the city—including a very volatile situation regarding the occupation of a central park in the city—which we would label his communal, authentic, and transformational leadership styles.
- He talked about the agility of the fire services to adapt and change while some of their basic assumptions regarding their role in the community were challenged, which links to our discussion of transformational leadership.
- He referred to being present and setting clear standards for what he expected from himself and others, which is aligned with transactional leadership as well as with trust.
- He had to communicate transparently, expressing hope and optimism, which relates to the components of authentic leadership, inspiring leadership, and the PsyCap levels of his community and the fire services.

- He demonstrated a keen focus on continuous learning and building a culture where others would seek to learn how best to take on these new and emerging extreme events, in line with the self and transformational leadership development culture described in this chapter.

CONCLUSION

We set out to explain how a developmentally ready leader can be more effective in addressing novel, risky, and ambiguous extreme situations. Leaders frequently have to act with short notice when addressing extreme events. In this case, we can see that Chief Scoggins' actions leveraged his years of experience to enable him to address the extreme events he faced more effectively while maintaining the readiness to continue to learn and adapt. Hopefully we, as a community and a nation, will be more developmentally ready the next time extreme and unpredictable events emerge and need to be addressed by our region's leadership.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Developmental readiness entails both the *ability* and the *motivation* to develop. It requires that an individual's self-concept be oriented toward growth and change in order to build the confidence to explore new experiences.
2. Leaders' and team members' levels of developmental readiness enhance their organization's capacity to learn and develop, and ultimately to adapt to novel and dangerous situations.
3. Demands, threats, opportunities, and followers' needs will change from one context to the next. Thus, leaders need to develop an array of leadership styles to meet these various demands and be flexible in enacting them.
4. Transformational/charismatic leadership (individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspiring motivation, and idealized influence) and authentic leadership (internalized moral/ethical perspective, balanced processing, transparency, and self-awareness) are two important approaches to leading in dangerous contexts.
5. Transformational and authentic leadership styles foster psychological capital (hope, efficacy, resiliency, and optimism) in others to help them get through challenging and dangerous situations.
6. An organizational culture that is driven by shared values and beliefs and that promotes learning, disciplined initiative, and self-leadership has a greater capacity to adapt to novel and dangerous-context demands.

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CHAPTER 14

Empowering Initiative

The Key to Adapting in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous Environment

TRAVIS S. TILMAN, ANDREW LEDFORD, BRADY DEARDEN, AND SAM BENSON

"SUBORDINATE LEADERS MAY NOT BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE to their higher headquarters, even if they wanted to."[1] Then–Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Milley made that prediction in 2017 while discussing his vision of a rapidly changing future battlefield. "We are going to have to empower [and] decentralize leadership to make decisions. . . . It takes a lot of judgment."[2] General Milley's view of an exceptionally volatile future is not unique. Leaders across society recognize that disruption is proceeding at an ever-increasing pace. To successfully adapt and win amidst the turbulence, both public and private sectors will need to embrace the type of leadership Milley championed: empowered initiative.

In this chapter, experienced leaders from the conventional Army, Navy Special Operations Forces (SOF), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) provide unique perspectives on empowering initiative within organizations. In particular, they discuss keys to adapting and learning in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. Practitioners will find key points of doctrine, real-world examples, and useful tools to assist them on their daily path to mission success.

UNDERSTANDING THE VUCA ENVIRONMENT: ORIENT ON THE TERRAIN

The military uses the acronym VUCA to describe the realities inherent in chaotic environments.[3] The terminology has also gained popularity in business, where rigid thinking can prevent needed change in an increasingly disrupted world.[4] Leaders in both public and private sectors acknowledge the challenges of today's dynamic world, especially in light of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (the integration of artificial intelligence and robotics

into operations), which is quickly ushering in exponential technological advancement. The need to understand and react to VUCA conditions has never been greater.

A volatile context is one that changes rapidly and unpredictably. In a military setting, the speed of change in battlefield effects is a reflection of volatility. At the strategic level, the exceptional speed of modern cyber effects compared to traditional kinetic effects is an example of volatility. For the practitioner at the tactical level, a volatile battlefield environment may be one with constantly changing inputs such as enemy strength, firepower, and positioning. A perfect business example is the Cboe Volatility Index, or VIX, which represents the market's expectation of thirty-day forward-looking volatility. The value of the VIX can change swiftly by wide margins based on small adjustments to perceived business risk. It's often referred to as the "fear index," an indication that the human element also plays a role in shaping the VUCA environment.[5]

An uncertain atmosphere can exist when parameters are unknown or not well defined, or when a person is not confident in grasping the situation. In a military setting it may best be defined by von Clausewitz's term "fog of war."[6] Uncertainty played a key role in the Battle of Roberts Ridge in March 2002, when three contested helicopter landings took place on Takur Ghar mountain in eastern Afghanistan. Fighting above 10,000 feet in the Hindu Kush, U.S. Special Operations Forces battled well-hidden al-Qaeda insurgents, challenging terrain, winter weather, and the difficulty of maintaining multiple communication pipelines stemming from the many units involved. The numerous perspectives on the ground and several different chains of command added to the uncertainty of the environment.[7]

A complex environment is composed of many different and interconnected parts. In the business world, this is acutely seen in the digital realm. The development, integration, and upgrade of software code at scale presents a highly complex challenge in all industries. In the defense sector, Lockheed Martin's F-35 contains more than eight million lines of code.[8] In law enforcement, complexity is a perennial challenge as statutes are continually updated and refresher training is a necessity.

An ambiguous situation may have several possible meanings or interpretations (see figure 14.1). It may also be difficult to comprehend or distinguish changes to the environment. The emergence of "hybrid warfare" on the modern military battleground harnesses the power of ambiguity.[9] The use of irregular forces and subversive operations

UNDERSTANDING THE VUCA ENVIRONMENT
Orient on the Terrain

A **volatile** context is one that changes rapidly and unpredictably.
An **uncertain** atmosphere is unknown or undefined.
A **complex** environment is one composed of many different and connected parts.
An **ambiguous** situation may have several possible meanings or interpretations.

FIGURE 14.1. Understanding the VUCA Environment

against an enemy capitalizes on a lack of situational clarity and legal certainty. The rules of engagement are difficult to define in hybrid warfare, and the practitioner must pay astute attention to the developing situation. Across military, law enforcement, and business contexts, it is also increasingly difficult to ascertain whether cyber operations are the result of nation-states, criminal organizations, or rogue individuals.

EMPOWERED INITIATIVE: FINDING TRUE NORTH

To navigate this challenging landscape, practitioners need a reliable azimuth for true north. Leaders with experience in VUCA environments find such an azimuth in the form of a particular and deliberate culture interwoven into an organization's hierarchical levels of authority. Many traits describe this culture, but one in particular permeates leader discussions—the principle of empowered initiative. This tenet operates from both the leader perspective—unleashing decentralized decision making—and the subordinate perspective—understanding disciplined initiative and wise risk management. In this section, experienced leaders from the conventional Army, Navy SOF, and FBI provide unique perspectives on the practice of empowered initiative. Key discussion centers on friction, seeking advantage, reinforcing seams, and training.

Friction

Understanding the role of friction is key for leaders planning to execute empowered initiative. This includes recognition of the friction faced by one's own organization, the implications of injecting friction into the environment, and the importance of anticipating future friction.

Military leaders acknowledge friction as an inherent part of battle. External forces such as physical terrain and enemy operations invariably create friction. In addition, an organization's own internal forces produce significant levels of friction. "Friction . . . reflects the difficulties associated with the nature of war, and in particular the human aspects and the role played by luck and chance that permeates strategy."[10] Leaders who grasp the natural resistance of the environment as well as the energy necessary to overcome their own organizational shortcomings are well situated to act amidst uncertainty.

Grasping the role of friction also includes the consideration of creating it. SOF units understand how to use friction as a tool to exacerbate friction for the enemy. Usually operating in much smaller numbers than the enemy forces they are opposing, SOF units see friction as an opportunity to gain advantage over an adversary. Conventional forces also harness the value of jamming communications networks and jamming GPS systems to increase the fog of war for the enemy.

Empowered initiative further calls for an understanding of friction beyond the present. The ability to anticipate and experiment with future friction helps a leader project guidance for the organization. For example, military leaders recognize that the nature of conflict demonstrated recently in places like Afghanistan and Iraq may not be indicative

of future conflicts with near-peer adversaries. Consequently, operations at the U.S. Army's National Training Center have pivoted to training against a hybrid threat in which conflict extends beyond two or even three dimensions to a "multi-domain" battlefield.

Seeking Advantage

Another tenet of empowered initiative is a mindset geared toward "seeking the advantage." Practitioners with this mentality continuously watch the shifting VUCA landscape and seize available opportunities. Principles to seeking and successfully gaining the advantage include a well-honed understanding of the environment, speed of maneuver, and flat communications.

A honed understanding of the environment provides practitioners with a knowledge of the opportunities to look for in a given situation. For example, Army helicopter pilots continuously take visual exams that flash images of enemy tanks and tracked vehicles. The exam process sharpens a pilot's ability to correctly identify enemy vehicles and, depending on the armament of their own aircraft, decide how and whether to attack or change flight profile to avoid danger.

Speed of maneuver is also a factor in seeking and gaining the advantage. Conventional Army doctrine instructs commanders to gain a "position of relative advantage (physical, temporal, cognitive, or virtual) over enemy forces by maneuvering more rapidly than enemy forces."[11] Successfully navigating chaotic situations and outmaneuvering the enemy requires decisive leaders who thoroughly understand the rapidly changing situation. They use running estimates—continuous assessments of the situation—to enhance their understanding and to visualize the operation.[12]

First responders must act with speed of maneuver by detecting changes in the environment. For example, a police officer may identify a specific stimulus that requires the use of deadly force and subsequently initiate the appropriate reaction or response to address the situation. When the subject becomes compliant within two seconds of initiation, the first responder needs to quickly identify the change in the environment and once again adjust the response. A small change in the situation may completely change the mission. In this case, it is not a traditional leader making a decision but a first responder empowered and expected to make that decision using his or her ability to adapt, remain flexible, and understand the intent.

Leaders must be comfortable knowing that a plan probably will not match the realities on the ground. But that should not stop them from developing a detailed plan, because such planning creates awareness and allows them to adjust rapidly as the situation develops. Leaders augment their awareness by taking action that allows them to update their running estimates and "to seize the initiative and exploit fleeting positions of relative advantage."[13] See chapters 20 and 21 for more detailed information on planning and Red Teaming.

First responders outside the SWAT environment do not make detailed plans, but they nevertheless must be able to detect changes in the environment and quickly adapt. For

example, a police officer does not have a detailed plan in her head when she approaches a car to issue a ticket. She approaches with a series of likely contingencies and must adapt quickly when the situation changes. Police officers train for each contingency by regularly training and rehearsing different scenarios and maintaining awareness to detect when the situation changes.

SOF leaders emphasize the importance of flat communications in their pursuit of advantage, a condition the special operations community refers to as "relative superiority." Relative superiority "is a condition that exists when an attacking force, generally smaller, gains a decisive advantage over a larger or well-defended enemy."[14] Flattening communications between tactical level units and the operational/strategic command is an important ingredient in successful SOF operations. The more fluid the situation, the more important it is that small-unit leaders have a forum for dialogue with high-level command leaders. Likewise, it is beneficial for senior-level leaders to provide context to the operational and strategic situation for the junior small-unit leaders. Weekly senior leader updates in SOF are often attended remotely by a wide audience to allow for this exchange. Small-unit leaders are encouraged to attend as their schedule permits. In the VUCA environment, a forum for communication between tactical and operational-level leaders is required.

Reinforcing Seams

A third principle of empowered initiative is seeking to strengthen the "seams" between organizations. The boundaries and relationships between organizations on the same team are naturally strained in a VUCA environment—and even more so when individuals surge ahead to take initiative. This drive to support horizontal boundaries is particularly important given that organizations are "weakest at the seams."[15] Key to reinforcing seams are overcommunication and the resourcing of liaison officers (LNOs) to drive coordination between organizations.

SOF often finds itself in austere locations working alongside several intelligence communities, conventional forces, and host-nation forces. Key to effective empowered initiative that supports all groups is a commitment to overcommunication. For example, there was constant friction between conventional forces and SOF in Iraq and Afghanistan because of their different perspectives. SOF's task to hunt down top-level enemy leaders required dynamic operations with little notice and at times collateral damage, because enemy leaders could blend into the population and flee quickly. These top-level enemy leaders had an enormous impact on the Iraqi and Afghan insurgencies. SOF operations, however, often destabilized the trust between the local civil leadership and the conventional force present to assist with security. From the SOF perspective, the strategic gains of removing the senior enemy leaders were worth the local disruptions. For the conventional forces, the SOF raids caused irreparable damage to the trust painstakingly built over years with the local community. Communication across the spectrum of units and agencies

working in the area was essential in overcoming well-intentioned but myopic perspectives and improving the effectiveness of empowered initiative.

The resourcing of LNOs to drive organizational coordination also facilitates empowered initiative. LNOs are used heavily in SOF to provide connectivity with the myriad partner forces and agencies working parallel efforts in the region. The more complex and uncertain the environment, the greater the possibility that a variety of units with corresponding different perspectives will be there. LNOs are essential to mitigating the destabilizing effects of multidimensional operations in the VUCA environment.

The LNO lives with the partner unit and attends its intelligence and operational meetings. Each party—the LNO and the unit—must trust and respect the other for the liaison to function successfully. For example, a high-level target's pattern of life was being established for a SOF operation in Afghanistan when a small group of men moving on foot with shoulder-fired rockets was spotted moving toward a partner base several kilometers away in what appeared to be a planned attack. The activation of the SOF LNO with the partner unit on that base provided quick and decisive action, and a section of A-10 aircraft was brought on-scene within minutes to neutralize the planned attack. The LNOs are an incredibly valuable tool in the VUCA environment that provide shared understanding and mutual trust across the battlespace.

It may be difficult for a police captain to utilize the LNO concept due to limited resources. But different local and regional, as well as federal, partners can pool their resources and share information by forming task forces to address specific purposes such as seeking high-value targets; they are usually dismantled once they achieve their purpose. These task forces can help reinforce seams caused by jurisdictional boundaries.

Training

Empowered initiative is a skill like any other that must be learned and honed over time. Military and law enforcement leaders alike stress the development of this skill in both individual and collective training. In particular, these leaders note the importance of training an adaptable mindset, harnessing an experiential learning approach, and creating an environment that promotes decision making and not the avoidance of mistakes.

SOF leadership emphasizes the adaptable mind as a crucial but difficult-to-train element of empowered initiative. The SOF community attempts to instill this mindset through continuous emphasis in training and special attention to adaptability in mission planning. Trainers use changing scenarios to ensure an adaptable mindset. Training for room clearance within a building, for example, is conducted in "kill houses" that have movable ballistic walls and either catwalks for training cadre above the rooms or cameras in each room. The movable walls force SOF units to constantly adapt to unknown sequences of rooms and hallways while using live ammunition, often having to place shots within feet of their teammates in the room. Training cadre debrief each run, working through the individual decisions of each team member and the consequences of those

decisions. This high-risk, high-stress training reinforces an adaptable mindset that allows split-second decisions in an uncertain environment. The mindset takes months or years to develop, and SEALs, Army Special Forces, Rangers, and Marine Special Operations all train this principle during mission preparation.

SOF pays special attention to an adaptable mindset in all their mission planning. Units prepare for the "what ifs" by war-gaming or Red Teaming (see chapter 21) every thinkable scenario. Units prepare for one, two, or multiple vehicles or aircraft to go down en route to the target and know by name who will shuffle priorities for each possibility. Each mission includes a minimum number of operators who must be operational to continue, or the operation is aborted. These contingencies are rehearsed along with the original plan, with all involved knowing that the enemy and friction will get a vote as well, and the reality could be very different. During the Osama bin Laden mission, the raid force rehearsed for a helicopter-down contingency and prepared for that possibility with a separate stand-by force in helicopters nearby.[16] Changing atmospherics at the objective's given altitude degraded the potential lift of the helicopter, causing it to settle during its landing approach and crash on a wall of the compound. Within seconds, half of the raid force that was originally preparing to land on the roof of the building found themselves in the courtyard moving toward the target as if that had been the plan all along.

A second tenet to training empowered initiative is providing an experiential approach to learning and individual development. Law enforcement leaders teach that such an approach develops a deep understanding of intent and an external view to problem solving. Law enforcement trainees are placed in flexible and fluid scenarios without the ability to obtain orders from higher authority. They are taught to focus on "reading the environment." To facilitate their growth, trainees are never given a sterile scenario. There is always something for them to see and address as they problem solve. This requires trainees to avoid an internal focus on their individual movement and forces them to adjust actions and communication to attain team and environmental compliance. Each action and decision are based on the situation and the team. After-action reviews (AARs) focus on what each individual saw and experienced during the scenario and help to capture lessons learned from both successes and failures. The AARs indicate what needs to be fixed so the unit can continue to grow.

In addition to experiential learning, the law enforcement community also trains empowered initiative through scenarios that specifically focus on decision making. An instructor's highest priority is to help trainees assess the appropriateness of a decision. It is not the instructor's role to tell trainees how they should react; instead, they focus on the trainees' thought processes. To facilitate this focus, instructors are coached to probe the trainees with questions to determine where the trainee is having trouble in the decision-making process. The instructor can determine if the trainee has an appropriate external view and also hear what the trainee determines to be a priority for action cues. Examples of these questions include: "What was necessary?" "What did you first observe?" "Were you trying

to keep innocent people safe?" If the trainee is unable to answer these types of questions, the instructor can assume the trainee is missing the problem recognition phase and going straight to a reaction. The organization can then adjust training to slow that process down and focus on the specific process the trainee needs to improve or evaluate.

Law enforcement's approach to experiential learning and its focus on decision making are evident in the following scenario. Two trainee investigators are tasked to interview a bank manager who contacted their office. The manager said he has evidence of financial fraud occurring at a specific branch. The bank is in a busy business district and gets a significant amount of foot traffic. The investigators park in the bank parking lot and call in their location to dispatch. They enter the bank and identify the manager's office, introduce themselves, and sit down to conduct the interview. Several minutes into the interview, the trainee investigators hear a loud voice in the lobby. The manager looks through the door and sees a man with a weapon. The man has a calm demeanor and is gesturing for the teller to fill a bag with cash. He says, "No one will get hurt, I just want the money." The investigators observe about eight customers between them and the robber, and two tellers behind the robber. These observations occur in three to five seconds. The two investigators quickly identify the man with the gun. They draw their service pistols, issue commands, and begin shooting at the robber. The robber turns and fires his pistol at the investigators, then runs out of the bank, jumps into a vehicle, and drives away. The investigators chase the robber outside and gather vehicle information and call their dispatch for responding officers. As the investigators walk back into the bank, they see one teller and six customers wounded.

In the scenario above, an instructor will ask the trainees what they saw. A plausible response would be that both trainees saw a man with a weapon and immediately drew their pistols. One trainee immediately regretted drawing his weapon. He did not notice all the people until his gun was already out. The other trainee investigator did not notice the wounded people until after the robber got away and the pair walked back into the bank. The instructor would understand both trainee investigators were very quick to detect the problem but did not recognize the scope of the problem before they initiated a reaction. He would ask the trainees if their actions, although legally compliant, were situationally appropriate. The instructor will be comfortable with uncomfortable silence while the trainees worked through their decisions. If trainees ask what they should have done, instructor should respond by asking them what they think they should have done in the situation, helping the trainees further define the environment, prioritize information, and learn to be confident in solving their own situational challenges.

MISSION COMMAND: THE FOUNDATION OF EMPOWERED INITIATIVE

The clarity that empowered initiative brings to navigating VUCA terrains cannot be overstated. The key principles discussed above help practitioners develop and follow an azimuth toward true north (see figure 14.2). The azimuth alone, however, does not lead one to

PRINCIPLES OF EMPOWERED INITIATIVE *Find True North*
Friction
Friction faced by one's own organization Implications of injecting friction into the environment Anticipate future friction
Seeking Advantage
Honed understanding of the environment Speed of maneuver Flat communications
Reinforce Seams
Overcommunication Liaison officers drive collaboration
Training
Adaptable mindset Harnessing an experiential learning approach Environment that promotes decision making

FIGURE 14.2. Principles of Empowered Initiative

the desired objective. Just as physical terrain is filled with cliffs, swamps, and unexpected obstacles, the VUCA world is filled with challenges that prevent the sole use of dead reckoning. There must be a greater understanding of the map, elevated skill in orienteering, and most important, a strong grasp of the mission. With this additional knowledge one can then wisely deviate from the azimuth when obstacles arise and still find the path to mission success. This holistic approach, the essence of successful orienting, is also applicable to empowered initiative. It is understood in the military as mission command, and it is the foundational core to fighting and winning on the VUCA battlefield.

Mission Command Philosophy and Principles

In 2012, the Army codified the term "mission command" into its doctrine even though the philosophy had been apparent throughout its history, such as when U.S. Army soldiers seized the initiative to defeat British forces during the Revolutionary War and fought Nazi aggression across Europe in World War II.[17] The Army uses mission command to "instill and empower disciplined initiative in every member of the team."[18] Current doctrine identifies mission command as the Army's approach to command and control and describes seven principles necessary for successful application of mission command: competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander's intent, mission orders, disciplined

initiative, and risk acceptance.[19] This section uses the Army's mission command philosophy as a framework to assist organizations in empowering disciplined initiative within their own ranks. Law enforcement and other organizations use many of the same concepts and principles presented here.[20]

Competence

In order for individuals to act with disciplined initiative, they must first possess the knowledge, skills, and experience to make decisions and act under stress. Certainly, demonstrated competence signals to everyone around you that they can trust you. Institutional training opportunities create the foundation, while schools and other experiences expand individual competence. Beyond that, units must train hard, gaining quality repetitions at increasingly more difficult levels.[21] Leaders must be challenged to make difficult decisions under stress. Training should push individuals and the unit to the limits of their capability, where they may fail. Failure during training is a powerful tool when coupled with effective feedback and reflection.[22]

After each training repetition or combat operation, organizations should conduct AARs to capture lessons learned and share knowledge with others (see figure 14.3).[23] When AARs are part of a unit's routine, the mission does not end until the unit processes the experience.[24] Everyone—from the lowest ranking to the highest—should participate and have a voice in the AAR, because everyone brings a unique and valuable perspective.[25] Allowing and even expecting everyone to speak up during an AAR demonstrates to all individuals that their voice matters, giving them confidence and empowering them to act in other areas. Once shared, these AARs become valuable ways to gain experience vicariously through others and help to avoid repeating mistakes. They also capture strengths that can be leveraged in the future. Leaders should spend their individual development time reading through repositories of "lessons learned." The Army has devoted an entire center—the Center for Army Lessons Learned—to analyzing lessons learned in the field and publishing recommendations and best practices. Establishing a lessons learned program can help build a learning culture across an organization.

Putting the above into practice, a UH-60M Blackhawk helicopter company in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) used extensive AAR preparation for deployment to eastern Afghanistan. In the year prior to deployment, the company participated in multiple training exercises lasting anywhere from three days to one month. Prior to each training exercise, specific time was put on the training calendar for all pilots to meet and review the company's running AAR document, an Excel spreadsheet in which every training mission was assigned a separate tab. On each tab the specific training mission was broken down by chronological segments with "sustains" and "improves" catalogued in each segment. All pilots reviewed all existing tabs in the AAR document before each new training mission to ensure changes had been or would be made to

SUGGESTED TECHNIQUE ON HOW TO CONDUCT AN AFTER-ACTION REVIEW
Set the Environment
Vocalize that the purpose of the AAR is to improve the organization. Reminder that an AAR is professional, not personal. Identify procedure for documentation of discussion. Cultivate an attitude of growth and learning.
Key Questions to Pose
WHAT was supposed to happen? WHAT really happened? WHAT did we learn (sustains, improves)? WHO else needs to know?
Follow Through
Publish documentation of lessons learned. Ensure goals are set to build upon improvements identified in discussion. Set time to return to AAR documentation and check on goals.

FIGURE 14.3. Suggested Technique on How to Conduct an After-Action Review

previously identified shortcomings. The review session also ensured that new initiatives created during previous training missions would be continued into future training missions.

At the end of the company's year-long training preparation for deployment, the pilots sat down for a brief with company and battalion leaders to review the company's running AAR takeaways. This meeting solidified the company's hard-won lessons learned and also resulted in increased confidence between battalion and company leaders and the pilots who would be flying missions downrange. This trust was evident when the company flew its first resupply mission to soldiers in contact with the enemy. At the last moment the flight route deviated from what was planned. Battalion-level leaders watching the GPS signature tracking from miles away chose not to intervene or request an update because they had invested full trust in the pilots. The deviation occurred because of battlefield conditions and quick thinking by the pilots in the lead aircraft. The empowered initiative they displayed—and the belief in empowered initiative shown by battalion leadership—resulted in a successful mission outcome.

Leaders can use AARs at any level, and these can be informal or very formal. The process of thinking through the operation, learning from it, and then sharing the information so others can also learn is what is important. A simple format for leaders to use is: (1) What was supposed to happen? (2) What really happened? (3) What did we learn? (4) What do we do with the information/how do we codify it/who else needs to know? and (5) Who

(which individual person) is responsible for ensuring appropriate action is taken? These steps can help direct the conversation in a meaningful manner.

Mutual Trust

In order for individuals to act with disciplined initiative, they must trust that their leaders will support their decision making. They also cannot be afraid to make the wrong decision or fail to the point that it paralyzes or inhibits their ability to act. A learning organization where failure is a part of growth and candid conversations occur regularly will ensure that individuals are able to act when it matters most. This is especially true during AARs, when units need to get to the ground truth. Leaders "must build the culture to be open enough for a full and honest debriefing. . . . [I]t cannot be done in a culture of suspicion, hostility, and fear."[26] Effective back-briefs or AARs, driven by good preparation and thoughtful questions, can help individuals and the organization determine the best decisions made during mission execution and give everyone agency in their developmental process.

Building mutual trust takes time because individuals and leaders must have the opportunities to demonstrate their "competence, character, and commitment."[27] Shared experiences where leaders and subordinates are working hand in hand help to develop this trust, especially when it's a positive experience for both. Once trust is gained, leaders should feel more comfortable exercising less control on their subordinates, and subordinates should feel more empowered to act when required. While gaining competence requires progressively more difficult training challenges, trust requires loosening the leash to allow subordinate leaders more autonomy and freedom to act. A new leader with untested subordinates will rightfully be hesitant to hand over complete control to subordinates when the stakes are high, while an experienced leader with an experienced, cohesive team will be able to exert less control.[28] Ultimately, this team will have the ability to act with disciplined initiative and take advantage of opportunities presented on the battlefield.

> *Officer Smith, a veteran, and Officer Jones, a rookie, are on duty when a call from another precinct crackles over the radio about a lengthy police chase of a drive-by shooting suspect. Smith and Jones instinctively reposition their police car to a better response location. Hours pass with only limited information available through faint and sparse radio traffic. Suddenly, the suspect crosses into Smith and Jones' precinct. He crashes his car and bails out. The two officers jump out of their car. Smith intuitively provides leadership as he thinks out loud—"Don't take the corner too fast. Watch out for the curb. He is probably going to run east. There he is! He's running!" Smith is now running with his service pistol drawn; Jones is following his example. The suspect and a woman are crossing the street at the same time, and the suspect shoots five rounds over his shoulder as he is running away. Smith and Jones return twenty-six rounds. Both officers understand their primary task is to prevent harm to innocent civilians.*

The woman is hit once in the arm, and the suspect is struck nineteen times. Smith realizes he is in the open without cover and at a disadvantage. He repositions to maximize distance, creating a stronger position if the suspect continues to shoot. Smith controls the situation, calling out priorities to his trainee. "Watch her!" The suspect is calling out, "I'm dying, help me!" Smith and Jones quickly identify a significant friction point: their continued security versus the life-saving actions needed to preserve the suspect's life. Communication between the two is clear and concise. After securing the suspect, Smith provides aid. Understanding the competing priorities, Officer Jones provides overwatch while also providing medical aid to the woman. Smith requests Jones' tourniquet so he can put a second one on properly. It has been approximately ninety seconds since the first rounds were fired. The suspect survives.

After reflection, Officer Smith stated the importance of understanding the principles of their training and the rapidly evolving prioritization of actions. He and Officer Jones had developed a trust and understanding of each other's capabilities and strengths that allowed them to be adaptive in the moment. Officer Smith stated, "We had never trained for this specific situation, except in pieces. We just put those pieces together."

Shared Understanding

Ensuring everyone is on the same page takes time and effort, and extends beyond a single mission or operation, but is critical to building trust. There are basic competencies that provide the basis for shared understanding gained through institutional-level training, schools, certifications, and so on. Beyond that, organizations must develop terms of reference (TORs) "focused on roles, authorities, and responsibilities" and standard operating procedures (SOPs), and ensure that each is disseminated to the entire unit and updated regularly without input from AARs—they ensure that AARs are not just a paper drill recommendation but are codified and put into action.[29] SOPs incorporate best practices to outline clear instructions on how a unit may conduct a given task. TORs are useful in codifying who makes what decision in an organization or specific operation and can speed up decision making. They also allow for more efficient orders processes because only new or unique information will need to be presented. At the same time, units must be willing to break from SOP when the situation does not fit. SOPs, like a plan, give a solid foundation from which to shift when the situation changes.

Of course, SOPs aren't very useful if no one knows what is in them or if they haven't been rehearsed. Units should conduct extensive rehearsals to ensure that fundamentals are being repeated and everyone knows their roles and responsibilities during a specific event. One useful technique is to put individuals into different roles so they know not only their usual role but also that of someone next to them or even above them. This will help them to quickly adapt to situations when someone else, including their leader, can no longer continue the mission.

While shared understanding and mutual trust are built over time, situational understanding is achieved by employing mission analysis during a critical step early in planning. Chapter 6 is dedicated to operational planning and decision making. It identifies mission analysis as a crucial step in helping a leader fully understand the problem in terms of their given mission; the enemy or other adversaries; available resources, including forces available and their capabilities; the terrain or other environmental factors; the timing or urgency of the operation; and any relevant civil consideration including legal constraints. Arguably, mission analysis is a crucial step in planning because it allows leaders to see themselves and the enemy or other adversaries in the appropriate context and brings the wisdom of staff and leaders alike to help visualize the situation.

Commander's (Leader's) Intent

A leader must be able to provide guidance to staff when they are planning operations and to their subordinates to aid in actual execution. In terms of the operational environment, leaders must understand where they are versus where they need to be, and when that is clearly understood, must be able to communicate this vision clearly and concisely.[30] Mission analysis helps the leader get to this point. The commander's or leader's intent is the tool that allows leaders to communicate their vision and define parameters for an operation, and it allows subordinates to act without further orders or instructions. The intent is not the plan itself, but the leader's communication of the big picture—what the plan is intended to achieve and any key tasks required. Leader's intent should be understood two levels down, just as a leader should understand two levels up, facilitating subordinates' action and ability to act with disciplined initiative. While the concept is rooted in Army doctrine, leaders in different agencies find it useful to create shared understanding and allow subordinates the autonomy to act. The National Wildfire Coordinating Group, for example, describes leader's intent as an important leadership tool "based on the understanding that competent subordinate leaders who are at the scene of action understand the current situation better than does a senior leader some distance removed."[31] Likewise, law enforcement agencies can use leader's intent to "assign responsibilities to the lowest possible level—where plans become actions."[32] Leaders can then focus on the larger problem, and subordinates have permission to act with disciplined initiative as a situation such as a VUCA environment rapidly changes. Subordinates who clearly understand the leader's intent do not have to wait for a decision from higher up before acting.

Leader's intent includes three components: the purpose of the operation, key tasks that must be accomplished to reach the desired end state, and a description of the desired end state.[33] The purpose gives the reason why a unit is conducting an operation and ties into the larger picture or a higher leader's intent. "Why we're doing what we're doing" clarifies the operation's goal and meaning while providing the motivation to act even when facing difficult situations. Key tasks are the actions that must occur to reach the desired end state. They focus subordinate leaders on the process—the "how to"—of reaching the

desired end state. Finally, leaders describe the successful end state they envision—what does the operational environment look like when they have successfully accomplished the mission?

Leaders should express their intent for an operation as clearly and concisely as possible so that everyone under their command understands what they are supposed to do in the absence of any further orders or when the situation changes and does not easily fit within the parameters of a detailed plan. Leaders can verify the understanding of their intent by having subordinate leaders confirm what they heard immediately after a leader has communicated their intent. Similarly, leaders can walk around and gauge whether their intent is reaching everyone by spot-checking—just asking individuals they run into about their intent. Did the "telephone game" occur, and the leader's initial message become distorted as it was passed down the line? If so, it's unlikely there is shared understanding among the unit, and "disciplined initiative" may turn into a free-for-all. Williams and Stasio, applying this mission command principle to policing, noted that "leaders who clearly articulate expectations and the mission's aim will prepare their team for successful completion."[34]

Mission Orders

Under mission command, leaders use mission orders or instructions "that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve them."[35] These orders are clear and concise instructions that include updates to the situation, the leader's intent as described above, specific tasks for each subordinate unit, and any essential coordinating instructions. These orders help to maximize subordinates' agency in determining how they will accomplish their tasks to achieve the leader's desired end state without stifling creativity and ingenuity while maximizing buy-in and preparation time. Leaders can verify subordinate leaders' plans during back-briefs and rehearsals to ensure their intent will be met. Units can gain invaluable repetitions and create a culture of mission command by incorporating mission orders into everyday operations in the garrison environment.[36]

Disciplined Initiative

Disciplined initiative occurs "when subordinates have the discipline to follow their orders and adhere to the plan until they realize their orders and the plan no longer fit the situation they find themselves in."[37] Leaders and subordinates cannot possibly prepare for an enemy's every action. Situations can change so rapidly that the best prepared and rehearsed plan may be nearly obsolete just as soon as shooting begins. However, if a competent subordinate understands the mission orders, specifically the leader's intent (two levels up), and is trained and competent, that subordinate has the ability to act without waiting for additional instructions and to take advantage of opportunities that appear as the situation unfolds. For example, a subordinate can speed up the tempo of the operation or seize an unplanned objective to gain relative advantage over the enemy and, ultimately, achieve the leader's desired end state.

Perceived self-efficacy—a person's confidence that he or she can successfully conduct a specific task—is tied to both motivation and performance.[38] Subordinates who believe they have the necessary resources, including knowledge, skills, and ability, are more likely to take on a task. Individuals can develop self-efficacy in several different ways, but the most effective is through mastery experiences where they actually do the task, successfully or unsuccessfully.[39] Leaders can put subordinates in situations where they develop the confidence to act with disciplined initiative in different situations through quality repetitions. "Quality repetitions" here means that training scenarios must incorporate the uncertainty of combat. This could include displacing an enemy unit far away from their templated location or adding mission changes where leaders have to quickly adapt to a rapidly changing scenario. Through repetition subordinate leaders learn to adapt to the situation and still meet the leader's desired end state long before they have to do it in a dangerous situation. Transparent dialogue between leader and follower about prudent, acceptable risk helps facilitate disciplined initiative. Although it takes time, it creates the shared understanding of the boundaries a subordinate should not exceed as far as their level of resources and authority.

Risk Acceptance

The types of operations presented in this chapter are inherently risky, but leaders cannot simply eliminate all risk. They accept a certain level of risk with every course of action or plan they approve, although they do their best to mitigate or reduce unnecessary risk. Leaders also accept risk by allowing subordinates to make decisions and take action

ELEMENTS OF MISSION COMMAND
Comprehensive Approach to Navigating VUCA Terrain

*Mission command allows commanders to capitalize on subordinate ingenuity, innovation, and decision making to achieve the commander's intent when conditions change or current orders are no longer relevant. It requires subordinates who seek opportunities and commanders who accept risk for subordinates trying to meet their intent.**

Elements of Mission Command

Competence
Mutual Trust
Shared Understanding
Commander's Intent
Mission Orders
Disciplined Initiative
Risk Acceptance

FIGURE 14.4. Elements of Mission Command

*Army Doctrine Publication 6-0. *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces.* July 31, 2019. Army Publishing Directorate.

without their explicit approval as long as it is within the leader's expressed intent. While there may be some decisions that only a leader can make, leaders cannot be everywhere and will lose opportunities to gain or maintain relative advantage over an enemy if they try to make every decision themselves. However, a leader must be able to trust subordinates in order to give up control. This type of trust, a thread present in all of the mission command principles, must be cultivated long before an operation occurs. A leader can cultivate this culture every day through underwriting the decisions of the subordinates and giving them autonomy. Risk acceptance also implies that leaders give their followers the freedom to fail as long as they are using prudent risk and operating within the leader's intent. Punishing subordinate leaders who exercise prudent risk and fail will create a risk-averse culture (see figure 14.4).

BUILDING THE CULTURE: ACHIEVE THE SUMMIT

In 1992, then–Lt. Col. James Dubik wrote an exceptional article challenging leaders to develop a decentralized method of command in order to be successful in combat.[40] While he did not use the term "mission command," he was communicating basically the same idea—a way of commanding that allows for individuals to take disciplined initiative to win in a VUCA environment. Dubik recognized that leaders must cultivate a culture in which this type of leadership can occur, but that it takes tremendous time, effort, and preparation and cannot just be applied when a unit arrives in combat. In order for organizations to optimize performance and successfully reach the summit of their potential, empowered initiative must be practiced every day (see figure 14.5).

Develop Leaders

Leading an organization when lives are on the line and success or failure can have a large impact is daunting, because "commanders are responsible for everything their command does or fails to do."[41] Leaders cannot yield control until they have strong subordinates who also are able to lead. Key to growing leaders is developing them beyond their institutional-level training and education. Dubik warned against relying too much on institutions outside of the organization and encouraged leaders to develop a comprehensive leader development program. Leaders have an exceptional opportunity to share their ways of thinking and approaching problems because they are among the most experienced people in the organization.[42]

Leader development gives the senior leader the ability to regularly "convey [their] intent that is two levels down and to develop a common mind-set."[43] Such collaboration creates shared understanding across an organization and helps subordinates to answer the question "What would X want me to do in this situation" more rapidly than if such communication never occurred. Regular sessions where individuals and leaders can discuss different tactical situations or dilemmas are important to building a learning culture; so is ensuring everyone has a voice and is allowed to share their unique perspective. Dubik

HOW LEADERS BUILD A SUCCESSFUL CULTURE *Achieve the Summit*	
Develop Leaders	Regularly convey intent to subordinates at least two levels down. Foster routine discussion on varying tactical dilemmas with opportunity for all participants to speak and learn together. Create leader development programs that grow individual and collective competencies beyond initial institutional training and education. Design tactical training that pushes individuals to the edge and provides opportunity to make, and learn from, difficult decisions.
	Example in Action: U.S. Navy SOF develops adaptable leaders by frequently changing training scenarios. Mock-up buildings with movable ballistic walls constantly challenge operator thinking and foster leader discussion.
Set Conditions	Shape a shared vision by simultaneously sharing thought processes while actively seeking input from subordinates. Provide mission-specific commander's intent to focus subordinate efforts. Confirmation back-briefs create a strong confidence that all are on the same page. Once subordinate leaders develop their own plans for an operation, back-briefs to higher authority allow for greater synchronization and contingency planning. Emphasize use of rehearsals to drive comprehensive understanding of the mission, build trust in the plan, and develop redundancy.
	Example in Action: U.S. Army Ranger School emphasizes use of terrain models while briefing mission operations. Immediate confirmation briefs are used to ensure initial understanding. Walk-through rehearsals ensure deep understanding.
Reinforce Disciplined Initiative	Create purposely ambiguous training scenarios and praise individuals who exercise discipline initiative within the bounds of leadership intent. Hold subordinates accountable when their initiative strays from communicated intent. Use AARs to examine decisions and teach correct principles.
	Example in Action: FBI agents train under fluid scenarios without the ability to obtain orders from higher authority. Instructors use questioning during the scenarios to understand trainees' decision-making process. Training is adjusted to maximize experiential learning.

FIGURE 14.5. How Leaders Build a Successful Culture

recommended that these sessions be targeted toward specific groups of people who may have different needs, such as platoon leaders, staff, field grade officers, and so on.

Leader development programs can help develop the individual and collective competency that precedes trust in an organization. Leaders can use formal forums to bridge the gap in any shortcomings they have identified or to catch their people up to changing or emerging doctrine and lessons learned. There is no end point to leader development; it is an ongoing process, evolving and growing to facilitate continuous growth and improvement.[44] Leader development is also not entirely formal. Leaders must seize on opportunities to share their experience and develop subordinates whenever the occasion arises, especially during or immediately after a training event when the learning opportunity is fresh. This learning moment should be centered on helping a subordinate "learn how to think rather than merely learning what to think" and should encourage "innovation, ingenuity, initiative, and adaptability."[45] Finding these learning moments

requires a leader to be present as much as possible as training is taking place so they can interject open-ended questions that push subordinates to analyze their own actions and thought processes.

Obviously, training that does not present individuals with the opportunity to overcome difficult challenges when they are "wet, cold, hungry and confused" will not be realistic or allow for maximum growth.[46] Leaders must develop training programs that push individuals to the edge, get them out of their comfort zone, and give them opportunities to make difficult decisions and adapt to changing situations under the harshest conditions. This invaluable practice builds confidence and gives subordinates another repetition prior to a real situation. However, leaders should not sacrifice the quality of the training by trying to do too much.[47] See chapter 18 for a more detailed exploration of leader development.

Deliberate Discomfort—Building Capacity in a VUCA Environment

> *Ensign Johnson was eighteen days into his initial SEAL course, Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S), with five and half months still to go. The class had spent the last two weeks in and out of the Pacific Ocean each day, but on this morning the air temperature felt 20 degrees colder. A cold front had moved in, and the chilly San Diego waters felt significantly colder than they had last week. The SEAL instructors consulted their Navy air and water temperature tables that morning to check how long Ensign Johnson's class could "soak" before being checked by the command doctor for early signs of hypothermia. The cold front presented the instructors with a welcomed wrinkle for the class undergoing the arduous initial training course to become Navy SEALs. Ensign Johnson understood this was training and that the instructors knew what they were doing, but that didn't make the cold Pacific any warmer. As the student next to him got up to ring the brass bell positioned close by for students to quit training, Ensign Johnson reminded himself that deliberate discomfort was part of the course and his path in SOF.*

Deliberate discomfort is of critical importance in building capacity for the VUCA environment. Conducting drills in all conditions encourages the highest levels of adaptability in all members of the team and is essential in developing an enduring organizational mindset that is ready for such an environment. SOF training includes deliberate discomfort at the earliest stages of assessment and selection. Cold is a key element utilized in training for sailors seeking to become Navy SEALs. Using Navy exposure tables of air and water temperatures, instructors create deliberate discomfort with student evolutions in the San Diego waters to shape students' ability to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Intentional discomfort continues in training after assessment and selection, with training in especially harsh weather and environments such as the dense jungle of Panama. Training cadre take advantage of harsh weather and climate to enhance training when practicing land navigation, evasion and escape, survival, and patrolling. Adaptability is

a key component practiced by SOF through the use of deliberate discomfort not only in how operators are selected into the community but also with how they consistently train.

Set Conditions

Leaders set the conditions for initiative at every stage of the communications process. This includes creation of a shared vision, providing mission-specific leader's intent, receiving back-briefs, and rehearsals. Back-briefs and rehearsals allow leaders to coach subordinate leaders while ensuring that everyone is on the same page and that plans and preparations meet their intent.

A powerful way to create an overarching vision shared across the organization is to bring in members of the organization and seek their thoughts on where the organization can go. Ultimately, the leader determines the final product, but members who are allowed input in the process will develop a sense of ownership and be able to communicate it more effectively to the rest of the organization. As emphasized in *Taking the Guidon*, a Regular Army classic on small-unit leadership, "we are most committed to those things that we are part of creating."[48]

Prior to an operation, leaders set conditions by providing their overarching guidance, or leader's intent, which communicates what everyone should do in the absence of further orders. After leaders have given guidance, they can use a confirmation brief to give subordinates an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the intent and plan and to ask any clarifying questions.[49] The confirmation brief ensures that subordinate leaders understand the leader's intent and concept of the plan and gives everyone confidence that they are on the same page. The subordinate can now begin planning and preparing for the upcoming operation.

Once subordinate leaders have developed their own plans, they can conduct back-briefs with leaders to communicate how they plan to accomplish their tasks and meet the leader's intent.[50] Rehearsals at each level, from team to squad to company, and so on, then provide the opportunity to further synchronize an operation and to react to "what if" scenarios. Units, especially at the lower level, can execute more extensive rehearsals that better replicate real-life conditions. Full-dress rehearsals where everyone is wearing all necessary equipment and conducted on mock-up or actual terrain allow individuals to fully understand their leader's intent and gives them confidence that they can meet that intent.[51] Rehearsals can also include new administrative procedures such as changes to the process of arresting and booking a suspect.

In addition to planned operations, small units should rehearse their battle drills and SOPs regularly to develop the level of proficiency and precision their leaders expect. These types of rehearsals do not require a specific mission or decision and can be done while awaiting orders.[52] For example, units must practice entering and clearing a building repeatedly until everyone knows their own task and the task of the person next to them or the leader above them. Similarly, firefighters must rehearse ladder rescues on drill towers

to ensure they are prepared to rescue people from second- or third-story windows. Drills should be conducted in every condition possible—at night, in pouring rain, icy fog, sweltering heat, and so on. This develops redundancy and builds confidence across the unit and to the leaders above. Higher leaders will trust them to accomplish their mission even when there is no time to communicate.

After units have rehearsed their battle drills and SOPs exhaustively under myriad conditions, there's no need to further discuss them in written orders. They become habits, ingrained into the unit. New orders or plans can now focus on unique details of the upcoming operation. The leader's intent becomes more powerful because there is no need for exacting details of how to conduct the mission; that is now up to the unit actually conducting the mission on the ground, which has the freedom to change it as conditions change. Of course, the subordinate leader will present how he or she will accomplish the mission to the leader as long as time allows during a back-brief or rehearsal with other leaders from the organization.

Reinforce Disciplined Initiative

Leaders must reinforce the actions they want repeated. They should praise or even reward individuals who exercise disciplined initiative within their intent, even when the decision did not lead to success.[53] This demonstrates that the leader trusts and expects individuals to make quick decisions when the situation on the ground is different from the order anticipated and described. Praise for this type of behavior also demonstrates that the leader is willing to underwrite risk, creating conditions where individuals are focused on accomplishing the missions instead of avoiding failure or possible repercussions for their actions. At the same time, leaders must hold subordinates accountable when their actions stray from a carefully communicated intent. After all, this is not a free-for-all. Researchers from the Harvard Business School found that the most innovative companies are "psychologically safe but brutally candid."[54] AARs give leaders the opportunity to examine the decisions and actions individuals made throughout a training event and determine whether it was congruent with the leader's intent or not. In the words of General Eisenhower leading up to D-day, "I have no sympathy with anyone, whatever his situation, who will not brook criticism. We are here to get the best results possible."[55]

CONCLUSION

When Gen. Mark Milley introduced the concept of empowered initiative in 2017, he explained, "Subordinate leaders may not be able to communicate to their higher headquarters, even if they wanted to. . . . We are going to have to empower [and] decentralize leadership to make decisions. . . . In [the future] environment, the Army will need a cadre of trusted leaders on the battlefield who know when it's time to disobey the original orders they were given and come up with a new plan to achieve the purpose of those orders."[56] General Milley placed significant emphasis on the skill of empowered initiative as key to

future battlefield victory. Practitioners at all levels should take note and emphasize sharpening this skillset in their own organizations.

Practitioners can begin by understanding the principles of a VUCA environment. Examples of VUCA situations, such as the Battle of Roberts Ridge, will add context. It will also help practitioners to return and renew their understanding of the general environment. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is advancing technology at an exponential rate, which means continual innovation and disruption across society.

PRACTITIONER CHECKLIST FOR SUCCEEDING WITH EMPOWERED INITIATIVE

Orient on the Terrain: Understand Your VUCA Environment

Volatile: What can change rapidly and/or unpredictably?
Uncertain: What is unknown and/or undefined?
Complex: What are the different and/or interconnected parts?
Ambiguous: What situations may have several possible meanings or interpretations?

Navigate with Skill: Use the Principles of Empowered Initiative

MISSION COMMAND: THE FOUNDATION

Competence	**Mutual Trust**	**Shared Understanding**
Leader's Intent	**Formal Orders**	**Disciplined Initiative**
	Manage Risk	

SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES:

Friction:
- See the friction in own organization
- Inject friction into the environment
- Anticipate future friction

Reinforce Seams:
- Drive overcommunication
- Provide liaison officers

Seek Advantage:
- Hone your understanding
- Increase speed of maneuver
- Flatten communications

Training:
- Embrace an adaptable mindset
- Harness experiential learning
- Promote decision making, not the avoidance of mistakes

Achieve the Summit: Build a Winning Culture

Develop Leaders:
- Organic leader development programs
- Leader presence
- Capitalize on learning moments
- Ensure realistic training

Reinforce Disciplined Initiative:
- Trust
- Accountability
- After-action reviews

Set the Conditions:
- Create shared vision
- Provide leader's intent
- Require back-briefs
- Conduct rehearsals
- Build habits

Practice the Culture Every Day

FIGURE 14.6. Practitioner Checklist for Succeeding with Empowered Initiative

With a foundational understanding of the VUCA terrain, practitioners can begin to navigate with the azimuth of empowered initiative. Essential to choosing the right direction are the principles of friction, seeking advantage, reinforcing seams, and training.

At the heart of empowered initiative is the doctrine of mission command, a holistic approach to understanding the purpose of the mission and leader's intent. Through realistic discussion of principles—competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, leader's intent, mission orders, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance—leaders gain knowledge and context to practice this philosophy. In the absence of orders, as in General Milley's vision of future battle, mission command enables, even compels, leaders to find a path to victory.

Leaders instill empowered initiative in their organization's culture by deliberately practicing it every day. Developing leaders, setting conditions, and reinforcing disciplined initiative make decentralized command a part of the organization's DNA. In this culture leaders extend trust but also hold people accountable with candid feedback. An atmosphere that encourages initiative but also expects excellence will achieve the best results.

Tomorrow's VUCA landscape will become increasingly difficult for all practitioners to navigate. Essential to this future is the practice of empowered initiative, which enables leaders to orient on the terrain, find true north, and ultimately achieve the summit of their organization's potential. General Milley noted that empowered initiative allows organizations to achieve a "higher purpose."[57] Leaders who seek to understand, practice, and integrate this philosophy into their organization will climb ever higher as they pursue success and accomplish their mission. Figure 14.6 offers a checklist for succeeding in this endeavor.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Understanding the tenets of a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment will help practitioners orient on their organization's terrain. A volatile context is one that changes rapidly and unpredictably (cyber battlefield effects). An uncertain atmosphere is unknown or undefined (Battle of Roberts Ridge). A complex environment is one composed of many different and connected parts (eight million lines of code to the F35). An ambiguous situation may have several possible meanings or interpretations (hybrid warfare).
2. To navigate the VUCA landscape, practitioners need a reliable azimuth for true north. Leaders with experience in VUCA environments have found such an azimuth in the form of a particular and deliberate culture interwoven into an organization's hierarchical levels of authority. Experienced leaders identify empowered initiative as a key principle of this culture. Key tenets of empowered initiative are friction (recognition of the friction faced by one's own organization, the implications of

injecting friction into the environment, and the importance of anticipating future friction), seeking advantage (honed understanding of the environment, speed of maneuver, and flat communications), reinforcing seams (overcommunication, resourcing of liaison officers [LNOs] to drive coordination between organizations), and training (adaptable mindset, harnessing an experiential learning approach, and creating an environment that promotes decision making and not the avoidance of mistakes).

3. Although powerful, the azimuth of empowered initiative does not alone deliver one to a desired objective. Mission command is the foundational core to fighting and winning on the VUCA battlefield. The principles of mission command are competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, leader's intent, mission orders, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance.
4. Leaders who want subordinates to exercise empowered initiative must cultivate a culture that allows it to thrive. Time and effort are required to develop such a culture, and it must be practiced every day. Key principles to developing an ethos of empowered initiative are developing leaders (organic leader development programs, presence, learning moments, and realistic training), setting conditions (shared vision, leader's intent, back-briefs, rehearsals, building habits), and reinforcing disciplined initiative (trust, accountability, after-action reviews).

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CHAPTER 15

Leading Task Forces and Cross-Functional Teams

BRYAN M. WILLIAMS, PETER E. HUDELSON, MATT MURPHY, AND PAUL M. CONRAD

IN 2012 TWO FIREFIGHTERS WERE SHOT AND KILLED and two others were wounded while responding to a call in Webster, New York. In response to multiple acts of aggressive deadly behavior such as this incident, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) reviewed its responses to active shooter events. This led to the creation of the FDNY Counter Terrorism Task Force (CTTF) in 2015. The FDNY CTTF was modeled after the national rescue task force, whose mission is to provide life-saving medical treatment and to extract victims at terrorist and active shooter events.

In this chapter we examine how leaders can quickly build diverse, highly effective organizations capable of solving complex problems. These plug-and-play organizations have the capability to work across organizational boundaries, placing mission success first while maintaining high levels of trust and cohesion on their team. Our focus is on practitioners—the individual leaders, whether at the task force or cross-functional team level, who may find themselves building a high-functioning team in a time-constrained environment. Coauthors Bryan Williams and Peter "Ed" Hudelson each have over ten years experience as infantry officers in the U.S. Army with multiple deployments abroad and experiences leading maneuver forces from the platoon to company levels. Matt Murphy is a member of the FDNY Special Operations Command (SOC) and has years of experience leading rescue operations on land and water. Finally, Paul Conrad is currently running the FDNY CTTF and is a veteran firefighter. The experiences of these leaders, their stories, and the literature referenced in this chapter will provide a foundation for any leader who may find himself or herself assembling a flexible, adaptable, dynamic, and problem-focused organization.

Task Forces: A Demonstration

In the early stages of forming the FDNY CTTF, there was not a clear consensus on who should lead it and how. There was prejudice, doubt, and a general lack of interest in cooperation between the different agencies. However, FDNY and NYPD leadership took an active role in overcoming obstacles and gaining momentum. Together, they created a shared vision and identified a shared purpose that subordinate organizations could rally behind.

The CTTF is a task force composed of the FDNY and NYPD. The FDNY is made up of two subordinate organizations: Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and fire operations. The NYPD is composed of the Emergency Services Unit (ESU) and the Strategic Response Group (SRG). During an active shooter or terrorist event, one senior member of each group is represented in the joint tactical operations center (TOC), with the ESU in charge of the operation. On the ground, the ESU clears the affected area and sets conditions for rescue operations. Rescue operations are conducted by the Rescue Task Force (RTF): a cross-functional team composed of seven members of the FDNY and four members of the NYPD. The SRG provides security within cleared areas for the RTF to conduct rescue operations. Both the SRG and the RTF report to the ESU during their response.

Historically the FDNY and NYPD have had cultural gaps and competed against one another. The joint nature of the CTTF and the complex structure of the task force required a deliberate effort to develop trust, cohesion, and a culture of collaboration between the two organizations.

The TOC is a prime example of the importance of bridging this gap. Members had to learn rank structure, radio codes, and common terminology. For example, in an emergency situation where members need to evacuate, the FDNY uses the term "mayday" and NYPD uses the term "landslide." To prevent confusion, the CTTF uses "evacuate." The CTTF has found that for joint operations it is best to use plain language to facilitate common understanding among team members.

The CTTF also implemented an RTF training program for first responders. The purpose of this training is twofold: to orient everyone to the RTF's mission, and to provide training on basic RTF skill sets and operations. During training, members from the FDNY and NYPD are broken into teams and required to eat meals together to build trust and cohesion. This appears to be breaking down cultural barriers and making the team work together more effectively when the two organizations come together.

Through training and operational events, relationships were formed through different agencies. Cross-organizational trust was improved, and friendships were made. Each organization understands its role in the CTTF, and every member understands that their teamwork and cooperation are critical to mission accomplishment: saving lives.

TASKS FORCES AND CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TEAMS

The Counter Terrorism Task Force formed in the wake of the Webster, New York, active shooter event is composed of subordinate task forces and cross-functional teams from the FDNY and NYPD. The RTF is a cross-functional team composed of individual firefighters and police officers. Critical to the success of the CTTF is that its leadership established a clear mission and vision for the organization and intentionally created a culture of collaboration. Task force leaders intentionally aligned their strategy and their culture to ensure effectiveness and mission accomplishment. Cross-functional teams differ from traditional task forces in several crucial ways.

Cross-functional teams consist of individuals from various functional areas in the organization that work together to obtain a specific goal (see figure 15.1).[1] In this context, "functions" and "functional" refer to the different capabilities and skill sets that team members are responsible for (e.g., search and rescue, dive, ladder companies, medical evacuation, communications planning, command and control). Typically, cross-functional teams are more enduring than task forces, and they are often responsible for key organizational outputs that can be reactive in this VUCA environment.[2] The individual members of cross-functional teams have functional diversity, which allows them to work across disciplines to accomplish tasks more rapidly. Their broader and less rigid approach to problem solving reduces the occurrence of functional silos. Additionally, cross-functional teams develop a shared purpose that improves the team and its internal dynamic.[3] The cross-functional team can serve as the subordinate organization in a task force.

The Rescue Task Force (RTF) described above is a cross-functional team of eleven members from the FDNY and the NYPD. Each member is responsible for a different functional area, but the RTF itself is responsible for outputs across a variety of areas, such

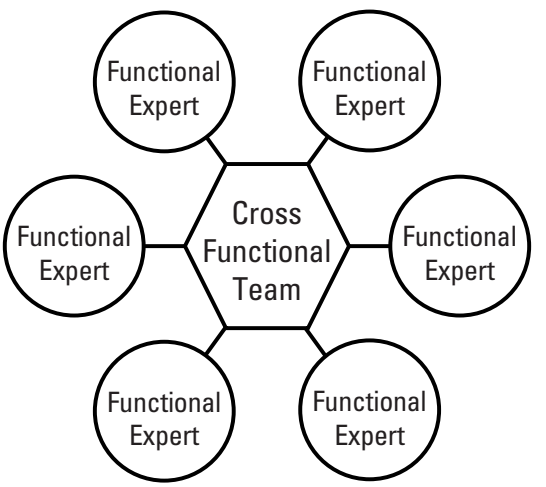

FIGURE 15.1. Cross-Functional Team

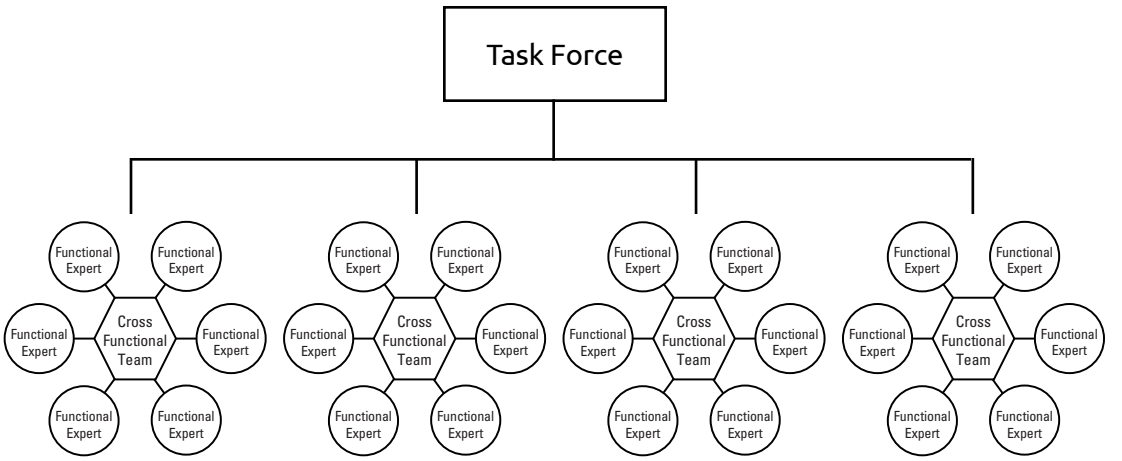

FIGURE 15.2. Task Force

as administering first aid, evacuating casualties, and security. Neither the FDNY nor the NYPD can address these concerns by itself, which is why a cross-functional team offers a tailor-made solution for each unique situation.

A task force is a flexible, adaptable, and dynamic organization formed to accomplish a definite mission that has a limited objective.[4] Task forces are generally larger and solve more complex problems than cross-functional teams.[5] Generally, they are time constrained and problem oriented.[6] Once the mission is accomplished the task force is dissolved. Because each task force is tailored to accomplish a specific mission, each is unique in its design and structure. Task forces can be composed of cross-functional teams (see figure 15.2), other task forces (see figure 15.3), or a combination of the two.

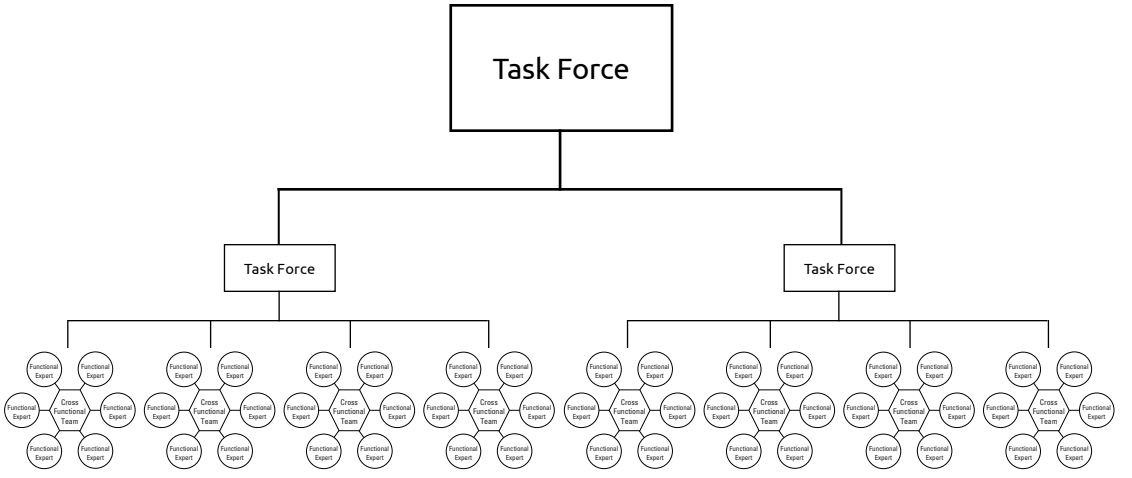

FIGURE 15.3. Task Force of Task Forces

The CTTF is an enduring task force that is activated for active shooter or terrorist events. It does not take the place of FDNY or NYPD, but it does help bring these organizations together to address situation-specific problems that neither organization can address independently.

Because task forces are tailor made and disband after a single problem or mission, such as the CTTF in the vignette above, effective leaders and team members need to be able to develop trust and cohesion quickly. They must be able to create both strategic alignment (the linking of what an organization does with its activities) and cultural alignment (the linking of an organization's ideology with its behaviors). Furthermore, to create cross-organization effectiveness—that is, to be effective beyond organizational boundaries—leaders need to create a culture of collaboration. These competencies can be used at the task force level, sub–task force level, or team level to ensure these problem-specific organizations accomplish their mission set.

Task forces and cross-functional teams are by nature disparate groups of interdependent individuals who might not have a shared history or preexisting relationship. The task force or cross-functional team leader is responsible for creating cross-organization effectiveness. How do leaders of these organizations ensure their formations are effective working together or working with external organizations? We propose the following formula for creating cross-organization effectives:

[trust + cohesion] + alignment(strategic + cultural) = cross-organization effectiveness

Underpinning this formula is an emphasis on creating an organizational culture of collaboration. In the following sections we will describe each element of the equation as well as leader actions in developing cross-organization effectiveness in these tailor-made organizations.

Trust

The first requirement for developing cross-organization effectiveness is trust. How do task force or cross-functional team leaders create trust and cohesion rapidly in these ad hoc organizations?

The impact of trust on team and organization performance and effectiveness is well documented.[7] Trust is a critical mechanism in all relationships, and it directly affects organizational performance.[8] Trust is a vital component for collaboration, and it underpins interpersonal relationships that are key to cross-organization cooperation.[9] Trust is integral to the task force and cross-functional team performance because it encourages cooperation, which enables team members to devote their attention to the task at hand.[10] Due to the conditional and short-term nature of task forces and cross-functional teams, leaders within these organizations need to rapidly gain and maintain interpersonal and organizational trust. The first step in this process is demonstrating leader attributes that foster trustworthiness in interpersonal relationships. See chapter 10 for a detailed discussion on how to build trust.

Three factors lead to trust in an interpersonal organizational relationship: ability, benevolence, and integrity.[11] Ability is defined as "that group of skills, competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain."[12] Benevolence is the belief that the leader is altruistic and working in the wider team's interest.[13] Finally, integrity is the perception that the leader adheres to a set of principles that team members find acceptable. These three factors together serve as the starting point to rapidly build subordinate trust.[14] Task force and cross-functional team leaders need to be competent within their field and in leadership. Their team members must believe that the leader will do right by them. Finally, the leader must possess and display the right principles as perceived by the team members.

Ability, benevolence, and integrity exist along a continuum, and all three must be present for trust to develop.[15] For example, if a trustee (the person being trusted) lacks ability but has benevolence and integrity, the trustor (the person granting trust) may develop confidence that the trustee has their best interest in mind and adheres to a proper set of principles, but they will not have confidence that the trustee knows what he or she is doing. Therefore, trust will not develop.

However, there may be situations in which meaningful levels of trust can be created with various levels of these three factors.[16] For example, early in a relationship the trustor lacks sufficient knowledge of the trustee's benevolence and therefore will rely on secondhand knowledge of the trustee's integrity and ability to grant an initial level of trust while waiting to confirm that the trustee is indeed benevolent. As the relationship develops and the trustor learns more about the trustee's benevolence, the impact of benevolence on the relationship will grow in importance. If benevolence is lacking, the trustor will not grant trust because they perceive the trustee is acting in self-interest without care for the team. Figure 15.4 outlines actions leaders can take to demonstrate ability, benevolence, and integrity to assist in earning trust.

Task force and cross-functional team leaders can inventory their abilities, benevolence, and integrity and identify their strengths and weaknesses by becoming self-aware. Self-awareness can be developed through organizational feedback and personal reflection. Practitioners who belong to an organization that gives member feedback in an evaluation or performance report can start by reviewing their past few reports. Even better, if they can conduct a multisource assessment feedback survey (up, down, and across the chain of command) they can garner holistic feedback on their performance in each of these factors. Lastly, and regardless of the availability of past reports and feedback, they can self-reflect on their abilities, benevolence, and integrity. Once the assessment is complete, they need to work on improving their weaknesses and playing to their strengths prior to assuming a leadership role. While character development is beyond the scope of this chapter, strategies associated with that can be used to improve trust-building factors. This personal development sets the conditions for success by preparing a task force or cross-functional leader to rapidly build interpersonal and organizational trust before being put in a highly demanding leadership role.

Attribute	Definition	How to Build It
Ability	Leader exhibits expertise within his or her specific domain	▪ Experience/prior success in this field ▪ Up-to-date on latest training and doctrine ▪ Clear, concise, confident when speaking and briefing (command presence) ▪ Well prepared; has answers to nuanced questions and anticipates common friction points
Benevolence	Leader takes actions that benefit the team and/or team members over self	▪ Projects a positive attitude ▪ Shows empathy and caring at a personal level ▪ Engages in shared hardships with team and subordinates ▪ Deliberately spends time building social cohesion
Integrity	Leader adheres to the set of principles that team members agree upon	▪ Be fair and consistent with different subordinate units ▪ Creates a climate free from bias, harassment, etc. ▪ Outwardly enforces and embodies the standards (fitness, appearance, personal conduct)

FIGURE 15.4. Leader Attributes that Build Trust

Task force and cross-functional team leaders want their teams to think highly of them, because supervisor perceptions equate to organizational perceptions.[17] Thus, if the leader of the organization is perceived to be trustworthy, then the organization itself is deemed trustworthy. This leads to increased team member organizational commitment and effectiveness.[18] This initial step of getting team members to trust their supervisor is critically important because it sets the tone for initial organizational success. This is paramount in a task force or cross-functional team because leadership does not have the time to build trust over a long period of time.

The importance of rapidly developing trust cannot be overstated. It is a critical component to organizational culture (discussed later) and a key piece in rapidly creating an effective team. Trust enhances the development of cooperative and cohesive relationships among group members.[19]

Cohesion

Task forces and cross-functional teams both benefit from increased cohesion, which can take several forms. Cohesion can be defined as the social and motivational forces between group members that create a bond among the members of a group.[20] People naturally form bonds and social attachments, and once formed, these bonds resist dissolution.[21] There are three different types of group cohesion: task cohesion (task commitment to the same shared goal), social cohesion (interpersonal attraction and liking), and collective cohesion (group pride).[22] Beal et al. found that task cohesion has the highest correlation to increased performance, but they also demonstrated that group pride and

interpersonal attraction have a positive correlation with performance behaviors.[23] This is important for the practitioner to know, because it shows different avenues to foster improvement within the organization, especially in teams that may not already have high social or collective cohesion. Furthermore, given the tailored and task-focused approach to building a task force or cross-functional team, the leader can initially focus his or her efforts toward developing task cohesion. Chapter 11 also discusses building cohesion in teams.

The time-constrained nature of task forces and cross-functional teams may initially inhibit their ability to benefit from the cohesion-performance relationship. Mathieu et al. found that cohesion and performance were positively related, and "that the cohesion → performance relationship grew stronger over time."[24] Performance and cohesion were positively related over time, but the relationship remained stable. The implication here for the practitioner is that cohesion takes time to develop (and more time to contribute to positive performance), but that in a time-constrained environment, one can focus on small performance wins to catalyze the performance → cohesion relationship.

A team's interdependence—how team members interact to complete the task—also affects the cohesion → performance relationship.[25] Tesluk et al. described four different types of interdependence: pooled, sequential, reciprocal, and intensive.[26] For leaders in task forces and cross-functional teams, the two most relevant types of interdependence are reciprocal and intensive. Reciprocal interdependence is when "work and activities flow between team members in a back-and-forth manner over a period of time."[27] Intensive interdependence is when "work and activities come into the team and members must diagnose, problem solve, and/or collaborate as a team in order to accomplish the team's task."[28] Both forms of interdependence create teams that have no choice but to develop cohesion if they are to succeed.

Linking interdependence to cohesion, Beal et. al demonstrated that as interdependence increases (reciprocal and intensive), cohesion has a more significant impact on performance.[29] Cohesion is thus an essential component for task forces and cross-functional teams, and practitioners can shortcut cohesion building by deliberately designing the organization to utilize reciprocal or intensive interdependence. For example, structure teams and give them tasks that can be accomplished only if they work together. Figure 15.5 shows actions leaders can take to rapidly build cohesion.

Trust and cohesion improve organizational performance regardless of organization type, but the cross-functional team or task force leader must develop these factors rapidly. Critical to this step is the team members self-identifying their abilities, benevolence, and integrity, and working to improve weaknesses. As the cross-functional team or task force is organized, the leader must be straightforward in identifying the type of cohesion he or she is seeking to develop and must leverage the appropriate type of interdependence to create teams that rely on one another. Now that we have discussed trust and cohesion, let us turn to the other element that makes cross-organization effective: alignment.

Element	Contextual Definition	Facilitating Leader Actions
Group Cohesion ▪ Social ▪ Task ▪ Collective	Team members get along on a personal level. Everyone is working toward a common goal or to achieve the same mission. Members view themselves as part of a team, and that team has an identity.	Facilitate short-term wins for the team early on (and celebrate those wins). Clearly define goals and mission and role in achieving that goal. Ensure communication both up and across organization. Create opportunities for interpersonal interaction (shared spaces, events, projects). Highlight task interdependence (see below).
Interdependence ▪ Pooled ▪ Sequential ▪ Reciprocal ▪ Intensive	Team members rely on each other to accomplish their specific function. One member's work depends on another's.	Specifically design teamwork streams to rely on each other. Team member selection to ensure functional diversity and high standards.

FIGURE 15.5. Rapidly Building Cohesion

Alignment

Task forces and cross-functional teams are created and oriented to face a specific problem. As such, they are mission-focused organizations whose success is determined by their ability to achieve results. How do leaders get their task force or cross-functional team aligned on a common mission and ensure that the results are achieved the right way? In this section we will discuss organizational alignment: what it is, how it is implemented, and key benefits associated with it.

Strategic alignment. Alignment is achieved by linking an organization's strategy and culture to achieve the desired results.[30] If done properly, it ensures the organization achieves its desired results the right way.[31] Strategy and culture are implemented by organizational leadership at the top of the hierarchy and are assessed through observing individual activities and behaviors. Alignment is extremely important for the task force or cross-functional team leader, because the organization does not have the benefit of time to figure things out. Simultaneous to building trust and cohesion, the task force and cross-functional leader must establish what the organization does (strategy) and how the organization is going to do it (culture) while remaining mission oriented. Then the leader must ensure that the strategy and culture are aligned with the desired results. The leader must communicate the plan across the formation and ensure that it is understood by all team members. Lastly, leaders play a vital role in assessing that their strategy and culture are being maintained by monitoring their team's activities and behaviors (see figure 15.6).

The first step in achieving alignment is creating and communicating an organizational mission statement and a vision statement.[32] Both statements provide guidance about the organization's purpose, expressed through what the organization does (mission statement)

FIGURE 15.6. Organizational Alignment

and its core ideology (vision statement).[33] The mission statement creates a shared understanding of an organization's strategy.[34] Mission statements guide organizational behavior through setting goals, objectivities, and activities aimed at getting results. Simply put, the mission statement and the subsequent organizational actions are designed to achieve the organization's end state. The vision statement communicates values, practices, and behaviors that set the organization's culture.[35] *In sum, strategy ensures that the organization gets results, and culture ensures the results are achieved the right way.*

Goals and values provide direction to where the organization is going. Goals are the strategic objectives that outline expected results and specify how the organization anticipates allocating resources and effort to achieve them.[36] Values are the organization's prescribed desired behavior, character, and culture.[37]

Objectives and practices are the operationalization of goals and values—the "how to" for implementing goals and values. An organization that has the goal of creating diverse teams, for example, may have an objective of achieving gender parity among upper management. Likewise, practices are the organizational decisions that support stated values. They should help the organization's members understand how to interact internally with their team and externally. Utilizing the diversity example, an organization may have the value of diversity, and the practice associated with it may be inclusion by fostering a climate where all team members are empowered to speak and act.

Activities and behaviors are the manifestations of the organization's strategy and culture. They are team members' everyday actions that support their mission and vision statement. Activities are the specific actions a team or teammate takes to achieve an objective.

Behaviors are individuals' embodiment of culture, the way they conduct themselves in relation to others.

Mission and vision statements are useful only as far as they are followed, as indicated by the team's activities and behaviors. For the practitioner, activities and behaviors become extremely important in ensuring organizational alignment as well as assessing organizational culture. This is where we turn next. How do leaders assess individual activities and behaviors to ensure alignment?

Given the problem-solving purpose of task forces and cross-functional teams, leaders of these organizations must ensure individual activities are aligned with organizational goals. This means leaders must continuously assess activities to ensure they are working toward mission accomplishment. Activities are nested with objectives and goals, and as such should be aligned by design. If an activity does not work toward goal accomplishment, it should be adjusted so that it is nested. Therefore, assuming the activity itself is nested with the organizational goal, failure to accomplish that goal is the result of an individual performance failure. Individuals fail because either (1) they cannot do their job, (2) they are being prevented from doing their job, or (3) they will not do their job.[38]

Leader involvement can help individuals who cannot do their job or are being prevented from doing their job. A team member who is unable to do the job lacks knowledge, ability, or skill. In that case, the leader needs to either reexamine the selection process to ensure that appropriately trained individuals are on the team, or take another look at on-the-job training to ensure that team members receive the proper training for the activity at hand. Individuals can be prevented from doing their job by role conflict, task overload, or resource constraints. For role conflict, reevaluate roles and address the conflict. For task overload, evaluate the tasks being handled and address the workload appropriately to reduce overload. For resource constraints, assess available resources and realign them for task accomplishment.

Individuals who won't do the assigned job can be addressed one of two ways. The leader can remove the individual from the current position or from the team altogether, or address the underlying motivation problem. Addressing motivational problems is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Now that we have addressed how task force and cross-functional team leaders can assess and address activities, the question is how do they assess culture? We will turn to Schein's cultural assessment model to answer this question.[39]

Cultural alignment. Edgar Schein's cultural assessment model (figure 15.7) states that an organization's culture can be analyzed if its observable artifacts, espoused beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions are congruent.[40] If they are incongruent, then there is a cultural issue that needs to be adjusted. Observable artifacts are everything that can be felt or seen in an organization. This includes team members' behavior, especially how individuals interact with one another. Espoused beliefs and values are the guiding values and beliefs the organization champions. These are codified in the vision statement. Underlying

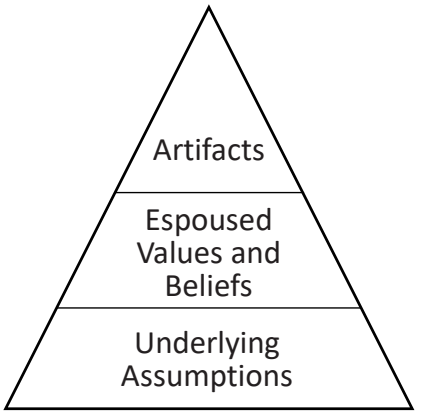

FIGURE 15.7. Schein's Cultural Assessment Model

assumptions are the taken-for-granted or unconscious assumptions that determine perceptions and behavior.

The task force or cross-functional team leader can continually assess the observable artifacts, particularly team members' behavior, to ensure the culture is aligned with the organization's espoused beliefs and values. If misaligned behavior is observed, the leader can ask questions to clarify the assumptions team members are operating under. This may point to values being used in an incongruent manner because of a poor set of assumptions. In either case, leadership must address the cultural misalignment to ensure that results are achieved the right way.

Though we have discussed how to achieve alignment and emphasized its importance to organizational performance and effectiveness, it is important to note that too much organizational alignment can be a bad thing.[41] An overly aligned organization may be subject to groupthink, lack of dissent, stifled innovation, or a myopic culture. Given the need for problem solving and the mission-oriented nature of a task force or cross-functional team, leadership must place a heavy emphasis on strategic alignment in achieving organizational goals. To avoid the negative impacts of overalignment, leaders must purposely curate a culture of collaboration with an emphasis on caring across boundaries. This is especially important for task forces and cross-functional teams because mission requirements may dictate that they work with adjacent units within their task force or with external teams. Teams need the ability to adapt quickly and "play nice" with others. If they remain overly self-centric or cannot overcome a myopic organizational culture, they will ultimately not accomplish the mission.

The next section discusses caring across boundaries, a foundation for creating the culture of collaboration that is paramount for cross-organization effectiveness. Caring across boundaries does not interfere with developing a cohesive team or an aligned culture; it is a complementary tool to ensure task forces and cross-functional teams remain adaptable to the VUCA environment.

Man Down a Vault

During the winter of 2010 I was serving as part of the FDNY special operations command. My unit was dispatched to a report of a "man down in a vault." That could mean several things and set off a litany of questions. What type of vault? Was he working in the vault and suffered a medical emergency or was exposed to some type of environmental hazard? Had he fallen into the vault? Was he conscious? As each new piece of information arrived, it was sent to the responding units and shaped the rescue plan. In this incident both FDNY and NYPD responded to the initial report. My unit was tasked with spearheading the technical rescue aspects of these types of confined-space rescue responses, a specialty area unique to us.

We shared a command structure with the NYPD for certain types of incidents. We worked alongside NYPD Emergency Service Units (ESUs), specialty units within the NYPD that are highly trained and experienced in a broad spectrum of emergency work. We generally operated according to a prearranged response and command matrix. Occasionally, this matrix led to confusion and duplication of services. Both organizations have similar missions but possess their own strong and individual cultures, which at times led to misalignment in activities.

That night we arrived on-scene at the same time as the ESU unit. As the assigned medic, it was my responsibility to enter the vault and ascertain conditions, hazards, and the patient's status. I was lowered down via rope approximately fifteen feet into a four-foot-by-six-foot electrically energized vault where a worker had been splicing a cable. He had suffered some type of electrical shock that had caused a significant head injury; he was semiconscious and was lying in a few inches of dark water. He required packaging in order to immobilize his spine and limbs to prevent further injury during removal.

While I was assessing the patient, an NYPD ESU officer was also lowered into the vault. Having him assist was helpful because maneuvering the large patient in order to quickly package him was difficult; but the extra space that another rescuer took up proved to be a challenge in the still-energized vault. The conditions and tight quarters were stressful for both of us because neither of us wanted to receive a shock while standing in water. However, the experience also created a shared bond that gave two rescuers from two different organizations a common goal: package this patient carefully and get out as quickly as possible. We both communicated maturely and effectively with help from our team on the street above as we guided his body up and out. When the patient was out of the vault, he was evacuated to a nearby medical treatment facility.

Once we were removed from the hole, we organized our respective teams' equipment. My unit huddled together for an informal debrief in anticipation of a more formal after-action review. As we were concluding, I approached the police officer I just finished working with and properly introduced myself. We both extended our

> *hands and thanked each other for the professionalism and respect with which we had treated one another and agreed that if different personalities had been involved, the operation could have been affected negatively.*

Caring across Boundaries: A Culture of Collaboration

Too much internal cohesion can lead to a highly self-centered team that works well only with itself. A key piece to leading a task force or cross-functional team is finding the right balance between creating a team that is cohesive and dedicated to each other and balancing that with a culture that can work well with others. Leaders and members can see how their work impacts those on their own team, but how do they view other teams and task forces who are competing for the same resources and recognition? How do we reframe this competition as something positive? How do they zoom out from their own collective and social cohesion to identify as part of something bigger? We believe the answer to this problem is caring across boundaries.

Simply put, caring across boundaries is working with and relating to people who are not a part of your task force or cross-functional team but whose collaboration is essential to accomplish the mission. The vault vignette is a success story of caring across boundaries between the FDNY and NYPD during a rescue operation. This comes from the idea that a relationship between an in-group member and an out-group member can strengthen the collaborative efforts between groups.[42] Caring across boundaries is the dynamic that allows task forces to succeed in a highly adaptive and reactive environment because it forms a connection where one does not organically exist. It helps psychologically move a different team from competitor to counterpart, from out-group to in-group. Sharing unstructured time with members from outside organizations, as described in sharing meals between the FDNY and NYPD in the first vignette, is a way to help strengthen bonds between competitive organizations. When intergroup dissimilarity is high, there are increased barriers to helping a perceived out-group.[43] For the practitioner, this means that one team is less likely to help a partner unit or a different organization if they do not look, act, and behave like them. We have already discussed the importance of alignment in easing this burden, but deliberately fostering social cohesion across a task force can also work to the organization's benefit. Simply put, get to know people you do not ordinarily work with.

Leaders directly set the conditions for working across boundaries by caring across boundaries. Good leaders go out of their way to foster interactions between different groups, because social cohesion across the task force has implications for performance at all levels. Especially in large and diverse organizations, it is impossible to know (and really know well) every member of the team. In his book *Team of Teams,* Gen. Stanley McChrystal, USA (Ret.), makes the point that it is imperative to know at least one person from each team that makes up a task force, because they become the reference point and the motivation to work hard and accomplish the mission.[44]

Tactical alignment at the user level. Trust, cohesion, organizational alignment, and caring across boundaries are the basis for cross-functional teams and task forces to succeed regardless of organizational boundaries. Without tactical alignment, however, all of this is rendered ineffective. We define tactical alignment as the individual activities and behaviors as well as the interpersonal skills that support getting results. These activities, behaviors, and skills should support the organization's mission and vision. This can happen both within and outside a task force or cross-functional team. The CTTF's work to ensure communication interoperability is a clear example of tactical alignment. Task force and cross-functional team members must remain agile and adaptable to any environment or situation. In the next section we will discuss how to achieve tactical alignment at the user level, regardless of who the practitioner is working with.

To rapidly address problems in a VUCA environment, teams must be able to communicate with each other and share information to build and maintain a common operating picture. Each group must understand the other's terms and graphics. Each should have a working understanding of how the other operates. Gaining this understanding requires time, collaboration, and deliberate effort. Tactical alignment is often overlooked, but it will reap the biggest rewards. Figure 15.8 outlines actions leaders can take to develop tactical alignment across teams.

Objective	Individual Action
Communicate	Identify primary and alternate communication systems that each team commonly uses. Create and share frequencies and call signs across the task force. Identify reporting procedures (frequency, format, what information requires an update). Importantly, what information can wait to be reported (to avoid overwhelming operators)? What are the requirements for checking in to someone else's area of operations or responsibility? Practice in nonemergency situations to build proficiency!
Common Operating Picture (COP)	Understand the task, purpose, and boundaries for each team (organic and otherwise) in your area. Get the updated COP to all teams and graphics in your area. Identify one point of contact at each adjacent unit. If the mission requires, work with an outside team, conduct linkup (radio or physical) to establish a relationship. Establish a cross-team reporting relationship to ensure operation centers are communicating and updating the COP.
Vertical and Horizontal Nesting	Identify who is the higher headquarters for a specific operation and what is the mission? Who is the lead, and what is his/her responsibility? What is my relationship to them if I am a supporting effort? If I am the lead element, who is supporting me? What is their mission, and how are they planning on accomplishing it? Who has the authority to make changes on the ground? If I do, how do I disseminate those changes to subordinate and adjacent units?

FIGURE 15.8. Tactical Alignment across Teams

Objective	Interpersonal Skill
Mission Accomplishment	Keep the mission, organizational goals, objectives, and activity in focus. Ask yourself: ▪ What is the bigger picture? ▪ Are my actions in alignment with it? ▪ Does my behavior reflect my organization's values? ▪ Does this affect the team's ability to get results?
Team Building	Are you remaining flexible with who is on your team and what team you are on? Are there cultural barriers hindering your ability to work effectively with non–team members? Ask yourself: ▪ What actions can I take to be a bridge builder instead of a bridge burner? ▪ How do I relate to this individual or team? ▪ How do I make myself relatable?
Humility	Leave your ego at home. If someone else brings ego to the fight, how can you remain humble and ensure mission accomplishment with their ego present? Reduce out-groups and increase in-group membership. ▪ Do you know anyone on this team? ▪ Can you identify one person on this team? If so, think of them. If not picture a friend on the team. Ask yourself: ▪ Is someone's ego preventing mission accomplishment? If so, how can you leverage it for mission accomplishment? ▪ Is your ego affecting your ability to collaborate? ▪ Is my cultural identity affecting my ability to remain humble?

FIGURE 15.9. Cultural Tactical Alignment

Additionally, leaders have the responsibility to create a culture that promotes and rewards this alignment. Teams are best served by members who are flexible and adaptable and are willing to work across boundaries. Figure 15.9 highlights interpersonal skills leaders can use to build cultural tactical alignment across teams.

Leading without Authority (Shared Leadership)

Practitioners may find themselves working in a task force or cross-functional team without the formal authority that usually accompanies such leadership roles. This, however, is not an excuse for not accomplishing the mission or achieving the team's goals. In the second vignette, the protagonist did not have formal authority to lead in that situation; the NYPD ESU could have tried to take control and be the "leader" instead of being a productive teammate. In these situations, the best practitioners will exhibit shared leadership and will influence without authority.

Shared leadership is a "dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of team or organizational goals or both."[45] This is especially applicable when there is no designated leader with whom sole authority rests. In an environment with low authority differentiation (i.e., shared leadership), Pieterse et al. found a strong positive relationship between alignment (both goal and strategic) and performance. This highlights the importance of "leveling the bubble" across the organization and orienting on the same objective, especially in an environment where different team members do not report in a hierarchical manner.[46] Members are more likely to participate in "shared leadership when they perceive higher levels of shared purpose."[47] For the practitioner, an early emphasis on creating and communicating shared purpose will position the organization for success.

Carson et al. identified three components to shared leadership: shared purpose ("team members have similar understandings of their team's primary objectives and take steps to ensure a focus on collective goals"), social support ("efforts to provide emotional and psychological strength to one another"), and voice ("participation and input").[48] These concepts build on and support each other, and all three are required to maximize the outputs of the organization. In fact, the presence of shared leadership and engaged team members is a stronger predictor of success than effective vertical leadership.[49] This means that informal leaders are important to the success of the organization, and that participating as an engaged teammate can be just as important. Figure 15.10 shows actions leaders can take to promote shared leadership within their teams.

Element	Contextual Definition	Facilitating Leader Actions
Shared Purpose (Organizational)	Each member understands and buys into the organization's purpose and vision.	Clearly articulate goals and beliefs of the organization. Solicit input for team norms, especially if starting a new team. Support with cultural artifacts (slogans, mantras, signs, badges, etc.). Highlight the contributions of other teams who contribute to mission accomplishment.
Social support (Interpersonal)	Team members support each other in the organization. They recognize and value an individual's contributions.	Celebrate success and recognize top performers. Do this privately and publicly. Create task interdependence between team members (rely on each other to accomplish their mission). No one works totally siloed. Foster social cohesion through events at work ("lunch pail culture").
Voice (Individual)	Members have meaningful input into the decision-making process. They are able to participate and voice concerns.	Create opportunities for team members to voice their own opinions. Solicit candid feedback. When circumstances permit, provide some transparency on the decision-making process and rationale.

FIGURE 15.10. Shared Leadership

SUMMARY

Task forces and cross-functional teams are nonenduring organizations that are tailor-made to solve specific problems. Due to the time-constrained and mission-focused nature of these groups, they must come together rapidly to accomplish their assigned mission. Leaders of these organizations are well advised to follow the following formula:

[trust + cohesion] + alignment(strategic + cultural) = cross-organization effectiveness

Trust and cohesion are critical to all organizations, but task forces and cross-functional teams are different in that they must rapidly develop both trust and cohesion to be effective in the VUCA environment. This chapter outlined key steps that leaders can take prior to assuming a leadership role in a task force or cross-functional team that will facilitate the rapid development of trust and cohesion in their organization.

Alignment is the linking of strategy and culture to achieve results. Strategic alignment defines the team's purpose and ensures that the organization achieves the mission statement. Cultural alignment ensures that the results are achieved the right way. Taken together, trust, cohesion, and alignment give the task force or cross-functional team leader a framework in which to rapidly build an organization that can work across boundaries and be effective in a dynamic environment, ensuring the organization solves the problem it was created to solve.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Leading cross-functional teams and task forces requires the leader to deliberately build trust and cohesion in a time-constrained environment.
2. Trust and cohesion improve organizational performance, regardless of the organization type.
3. Leaders must demonstrate ability, benevolence, and integrity to build trust.
4. The task force or cross-functional team leader must first identify the type of cohesion required, and then leverage the appropriate type of interdependence to create teams that rely on one another.
5. Small performance wins contribute to cohesion, which leads to better performance.
6. Alignment is the linking of strategy and culture to achieve results.
7. Leaders are directly responsible for crafting a mission and vision statement for a cross-functional team or task force, and for ensuring these align with their strategy and culture.
8. Strategy ensures the organization gets results, and culture ensures the results are achieved the right way.

9. Leaders must foster a culture of collaboration that emphasizes mission accomplishment, teamwork, and caring across organizational boundaries.
10. Leaders are responsible for ensuring tactical and cultural alignment across teams. Tactical alignment ensures that team members stay adaptable across any situation. Cultural alignment ensures that teams can work across boundaries.

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SECTION THREE

BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER 16

Creating a High-Performance Culture for Organizations Working in Dangerous Situations

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INTRODUCTION: CLASH OF CULTURES

Late one afternoon, Joan Davis, a former law enforcement officer, called a neighborhood friend threatening suicide on the anniversary of her husband's death. She had consumed a considerable amount of alcohol. The concerned friend called the police and frantically told the dispatcher: "Joan is despondent and very depressed about her late husband's death. She's been drinking a lot and behaving strangely. She does not go outside much. There are lots of weapons in that house—Joan and her husband were cops! I think she is going to take her own life! Get here quickly!"[1]

Ms. Davis had retired on an injury pension years earlier and had been a widow for some time. Her deceased husband was also a former law enforcement officer, so the suburban home was indeed filled with weapons. Recently, Joan had become more reclusive, as indicated by old newspapers piling up on the front porch.

Upon arriving at the home, police officers approached with caution. Knocks on Joan's front door met with no response. Carefully peering through the front window, an officer spotted Joan pacing in the kitchen with a firearm in her hand. The officers requested assistance from dispatch, who summoned a modified Crisis Negotiations Team (CNT) that included a Mental Evaluation Unit (MEU).

Listening in on his police radio from headquarters was the watch commander, Lieutenant Alex "Johnny" Johnson. This was not the way Johnson wanted to spend the last afternoon at work of his thirty-year career. A decorated and respected member of the police department's "old guard," Johnson felt law enforcement had become soft on crime and too nonconfrontational. Johnny argued that the

department's new emphasis on de-escalation and disengagement ran contrary to law enforcement's problem-solving, warrior culture. A reporter once quoted Johnson saying: "Cops are not social workers. Our job is to apprehend bad guys, and our first duty is to protect the public. Someone else can sort out the issues after we get bad guys off the street."

Johnson had worked in Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) before promoting out of the unit. He understood that recently enacted protocols dictated a CNT and MEU response to the situation at Joan Davis' residence, but he strongly opposed this approach. The new protocols specified that despite the presence of a weapon, subjects threatening to harm only themselves should not be met with deadly force or chemical agents unless they presented a deadly threat to others. Johnson thought to himself: "Just in case, I want a full SWAT team on-site. That's how we used to respond when I was on the team. You never know if the subject will start shooting at our officers." Johnson ordered a SWAT team to the scene with automatic rifles, armored vehicles, and other militaristic equipment.

When the CNT and MEU arrived on site, the situation was tense but stable. Officers established that Joan Davis was in the house alone and intoxicated. The SWAT team arrived as the CNT began the process of engaging Ms. Davis via telephone. Lieutenant Johnson rolled in a few moments later and assumed the role of incident commander.

The ensuing heated exchange between Lieutenant Johnson and CNT Sergeant Edward Alvarez was a classic clash of cultures. When Alvarez questioned Johnson about his deployment of the SWAT team for a situation that was clearly the purview of the CNT and MEU, Johnson became emotional. "What if the subject starts shooting? What if she is ready to open fire with automatic weapons? What if we have to force entry into that house? What if she shoots herself? We have a duty to prevent her from committing suicide. We will be liable if we do not prevent her from harming herself. I'm not going to let bad things happen or embarrass the department on my last day in service. When I was in SWAT, we handled things differently!"

Alvarez calmly responded: "Johnny, you know it's a myth that suicidal people can easily become homicidal. This situation calls for disengagement if she does surrender peacefully, not escalation, because she legally owns all those firearms. And look, Johnny, it's your last day. Let me do my job. Despite your best intentions, the law is clear on this. We are not responding to a crime. We are responding to a person contemplating suicide. Best practice demands that you stand down the SWAT team and let me handle it."

Reluctantly, Lieutenant Johnson ordered the SWAT team to disengage and move to a location several blocks from the scene. Sergeant Alvarez subsequently reestablished control of the situation and directed the CNT to make contact with Joan Davis. After speaking with Joan Davis on the telephone for about an hour, the CNT coaxed her out of the house, and she surrendered without harm or incident.

THOUGH THE SITUATION ENDED HAPPILY, the contrasting cultures embodied by Lieutenant Johnson and Sergeant Alvarez depict what happens when the "old guard" and its established practices, behaviors, and beliefs confront new realities, new leaders, new practices, and new ways of doing business. Thirty years of training, methods handed down by the preceding generation, and his past experience in SWAT had taught Johnny Johnson to see the situation as a series of "What ifs?" To Johnny, the situation demanded an overwhelming law enforcement response to a "just in case" or "worst-case scenario." Further, this was his last day on the job before retirement, and his past experiences of how law enforcement responded to armed suicidal subjects hijacked his emotions. Johnny trusted the "old guard" police culture that had been handed down and taught to him during his thirty years of service.

Alvarez, his CNT, and the MEU saw the situation much differently. They were the products of a new police culture that embraced changes in the law and represented new community expectations of law enforcement. Alvarez stated: "We had reason to believe that we were dealing with an individual who was very depressed and inebriated. I questioned the SWAT team response and militaristic footprint for a lady who was simply having a bad day."

Confronted with this *in extremis* situation, Johnson and Alvarez shared the same goal of preventing a tragedy. Each truly wanted to serve and protect the public, as well as Ms. Davis. Their methodologies, however, differed greatly. Johnson was groomed in a "cops don't back down" culture that valued public safety and overwhelming force over the threat of bodily injury or death to alleged perpetrators. That the situation was Johnson's last day in uniform symbolically represented the descent of one culture and the rise of another.

Alvarez, on the other hand, is part of an evolving culture that treats situations involving the mentally ill or suicidal subjects differently from situations involving criminal activity. The new culture is the result of changing societal expectations for how law enforcement should deal with people in crisis. The evolving culture advocates that "not all calls are alike" and suggests that one-size-fits-all police responses are a thing of the past. "Proportional response" is part of the cultural lexicon for CNT Sergeant Alvarez, but it was never part of the culture for retiring Lieutenant Johnson.

APPROACH TO THIS CHAPTER

The opening vignette demonstrates how culture guides behaviors and processes based on the participants' beliefs and perceptions about how things are done, why, by whom, and when. Culture evokes conformity: it rewards those who are complicit and sanctions those who are not. Culture is one of the most observed and least understood concepts on Earth, and it is extremely difficult to change.

This chapter discusses methods for creating a high-performance culture for organizations working in dangerous situations and *in extremis* environments. We review what culture is and what it does and define the concept in order to offer insights about building

a high-performing culture. Human high performance is foundational to high-performing organizations and high-performing cultures. We explain how leaders go about creating a high-performance culture and then transmit it to their organization. This chapter is a reference tool offering guidance and checklists for leaders as they go about the process of creating a high-performance culture in their organizations.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

An elegant, useful book that defines culture for leader practitioners aspiring to create high-performing organizations in extreme environments is Edgar Schein's *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (1992).[2] Schein's views are appealing because they operationalize—make concrete—many of the variables implicit in earlier expansive anthropological and sociological theoretical formulations. Schein's view of culture includes the attributes discussed below.

Culture is a collective system of shared habits. Rooted in Polish anthropologist Stanislaw Malinowski's ethnographic research on tribes in the southwest Pacific islands, Africa, and elsewhere, culture is viewed as a collective system of shared habits that add value to the collective. This principle emphasizes that every custom, material object, idea, and belief in every type of civilization fulfills some vital function, has some tasks to accomplish, and represents an indispensable part of the working whole.[3]

Culture is relational, created, taught, learned, and transmitted. Work by Radcliffe-Brown highlighted the relational aspects of culture based on bonds of kinship that extend beyond family, marriage, or blood.[4] Implicit in this conception is that culture can be created, learned, and transmitted in meaningful ways within and between varying social structures. Or as American sociologist Talcott Parsons acknowledged: culture can be taught.[5]

Culture is the chief executive's primary responsibility. American industrialist Chester Barnard saw the creation, maintenance, teaching, and transmission of culture as a primary function of the chief executive.[6] Barnard viewed material and monetary rewards as "weak incentives," arguing instead that they were inferior to the psychological and social motivations derived from being a member of an organization or team with a higher, more noble, and more honorable purpose. He argued that culture creates "a condition of communion and the opportunity for commandership."[7] Barnard explicitly linked culture with esprit de corps and élan.

Culture is intrinsic. Peters and Waterman's immensely successful book *In Search of Excellence* extends the view of culture from something that an organization *has* to something that an organization *is*.[8] Organizations, that is, take on the identity of the cultures they espouse, becoming part myth, part legend, and part reality. Peters and Waterman noted that "excellent companies are marked by very strong cultures, so strong that you either buy into their norms or get out."[9]

Culture is shared assumptions that bound behavior. Whether referring to "corporate culture"—the term typically associated with the private sector—or "subcultures"—the

various teams or groups that constitute the larger organization—culture is an attribute or quality internal to the group. It includes a fairly stable set of taken-for-granted assumptions, shared beliefs, meanings, and values that form the basis for action.[10] In this sense, culture is a here and now phenomenon that coerces conformity and bounds behaviors, practices, and processes within the group, team, and organization.[11]

To summarize: culture is functional, relational, learned, transmitted, perception based, and patterned. It is replicable but not transportable. Culture maintenance, transmission, and change are the business of the chief executive. Culture limits thoughts and bounds actions, and offers members of the group, team, and organization definitive though often implicit guidance about how to think, how to behave, and how to get things done while painting an actionable picture about "how things work" and "the way we do things." Culture is not *good* or *bad*—that value judgment is in the eye of the beholder.

The straightforward definition below clarifies the concept:

> Culture refers to a basic pattern of assumptions, norms, behaviors, and values learned by members of a group or organization as the proper way to think and behave and includes a general sense of "how things work" and "how we do things" in the group or organization.[12]

This definition of culture serves as the basis for the remainder of this discussion.

LEVELS OF CULTURE

There are three levels of culture within an organization ("levels" refers to "the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer").[13] The distinction between levels is significant because it implies that (1) not all elements of culture are readily discernible, and (2) there can be matches and mismatches between levels; that is, one can encounter mixed cultural signals and misalignment between various levels of the organization. Figure 16.1 depicts the three levels of culture.[14]

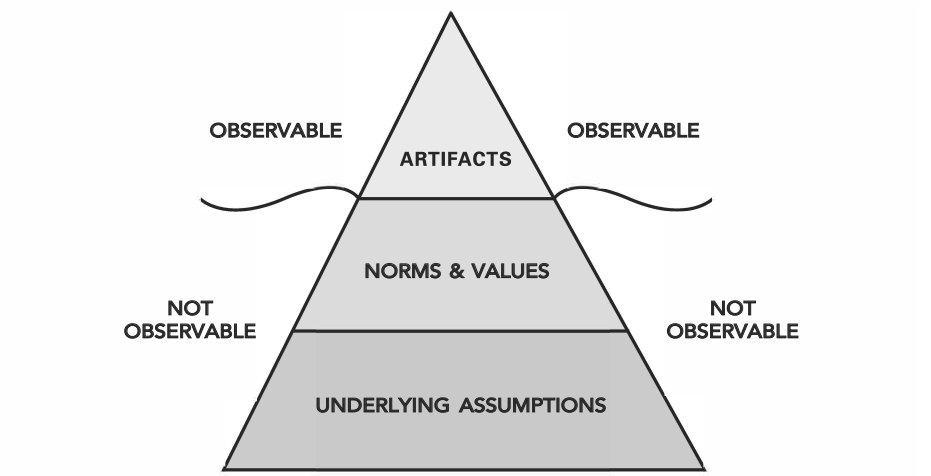

FIGURE 16.1. Schein's Three Levels of Culture

Easiest to observe are *artifacts*, which are "all the phenomena that one sees, hears, and feels" when encountering the group or organization.[15] Artifacts appeal to the senses and include elements such as the physical plant and environs, language, colors, attire, signage, behavioral interactions, stories, myths, legends, and ceremonies. Artifacts are what visitors and new employees most quickly notice when dealing with the organization. Artifacts, however, provide only a hint of what the organization may or may not value. One must spend a good deal of time observing or working in the organization to determine the degree to which artifacts "reflect deeper values in the minds of organization members."[16]

At the next level, *espoused values* or *norms and values* represent deeper, less readily observable aspects of culture.[17] Norms and values are transmitted to members of the group through learning, practice, and assimilation. Values are judgments about what is important in an organization, while norms represent the unwritten rules through which members of a culture know what is expected of them in various situations. What one values will affect what one perceives as "normal" behavior in an organization. Values and beliefs define the organization, are a mechanism for social control and conformity, and also influence identity development.

Those who best embody, transmit, and propagate norms and values to other members of the group become recognized as leaders. Because of this, culture and leadership are "two sides of the same coin."[18] Leaders create and reinforce culture, and culture determines the criteria for advancement in an organization. The transformation of members from value and norm conformists to norm and value instructors is cognitively significant because it represents a shift from *the must* to *the ought*. Assessing the degree to which all members of the group or organization buy in to norms and values provides some sense of the cohesiveness and strength of the culture.

The most difficult level of a culture to discern, and yet the most important, is its *basic underlying assumptions*. Paradoxically, basic underlying assumptions are hard to decipher because they are so fundamental and taken for granted. Schein noted: "When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it becomes taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis, supported only by a hunch or value, comes gradually to be treated as reality. We come to believe that . . . things work this way."[19]

Basic underlying assumptions are similar to what Chris Argyris called "theories-in-use." Argyris explained that "human beings have programs in their heads about how to be in control."[20] These organizational rules to live by are so basic, so underlying, that they are unconscious and unspoken. Basic underlying assumptions define "what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations."[21]

Mismatches and misalignments between levels of culture offer valuable metrics for leaders. When perfectly aligned, artifacts representative of norms and values, and norms and values consistent with basic underlying assumptions, yield a consistency that reinforces and guides behaviors. For *in extremis* organizations and leaders, mismatches and

misalignments yield doubt and uncertainty, which could produce a measure of indecisiveness leading to a catastrophic outcome, including injuries and death. From this, it follows that alignment between levels is one element of high-performing cultures.

John Kotter's seminal work, *Leading Change* (1996), explains just how difficult it is to lead cultural change.[22] Culture change "sticks" only after it becomes part of how the majority of people in the organization—about 75 percent or more—do business. Put differently, it is not enough to change artifacts or espoused values to effect lasting culture transformation. Permanent change will not occur "until new behaviors are rooted in social norms and shared values" and new processes become taken for granted.[23]

HUMAN HIGH PERFORMANCE: MINDSET, HEARTSET, AND SKILLSET

The fundamental truth about high-performing organizations with high-performing cultures is that they are full of high-performing people.[24] "High performance" refers to relentless production of consistently superior results that exceed organizational goals in a manner aligned and in consonance with the organizational culture.[25] To understand how to construct and maintain a high-performance culture for organizations operating in dangerous situations, one must first understand the characteristics of the high performers who make up the organization (figure 16.2).

In order for organizations to transcend adversity and respond not only to present challenges but to future unforeseen ones as well, they must find a way to consistently compel a diverse collection of the best and brightest to invest themselves into a shared mission with shared goals. High-performing organizations are best positioned to stay that way when the consistent elevation of organizational standards and goals becomes culturally engrained and normalized. In this scenario, leaders model the way and drive organizational performance, demonstrating through their behaviors the right way to get things done. High-performing organizations require high-performing individuals led by high-performing leaders.[26]

It is not surprising that highly demanding, dangerous jobs attract people who are drawn to *in extremis* situations, which demand high performance and provide regular opportunities for achievement, risk, and failure. Obtaining the right fit of people capable of performing successfully in a manner consistent with organizational values and culture is vital. High-risk, high-consequence environments provide opportunities for high performers to thrive, although not necessarily in a manner consistent with the organizational culture. Poor people-culture fit can lead to performance mediocrity and can have devastating and long-lasting consequences.

The next section addresses how organizations go about recruiting and retaining individuals capable of performing well in in their high-performing cultures. We advocate focusing on the whole person and how well individuals fit with the high-performance aspirations of the organization. Combining a greater emphasis on the whole person—that is, who that person is going to be at work, how he or she is going to interact with colleagues,

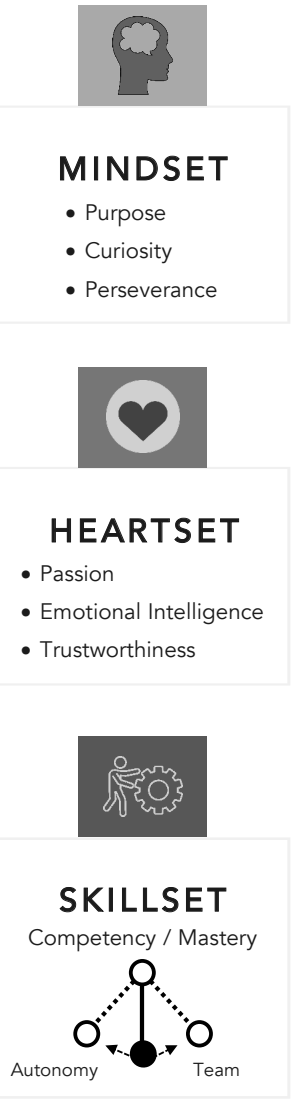

FIGURE 16.2. Mindset, Heartset, and Skillset

and the degree to which individual goals are compatible with the organization's goals—with traditional skillset and credentialing evaluations yields a workforce more capable of high performance in dangerous situations. In short, finding individuals with the right *mindset*, *heartset*,[27] and *skillset* is necessary for leading and performing in the extreme.

MINDSET: PURPOSE + CURIOSITY + PERSEVERANCE

Purpose

There is an extensive literature on leadership qualities for individuals aspiring to high performance.[28] The overwhelming consensus is that creating high-performance synergy demands both individual and organizational purpose. Establishing a clearly defined

purpose is one of the best investments an organization can make, and it must be consistently messaged and communicated across multiple modalities. Missions may change based on organizational and situational demands, but the actual purpose, or raison d'être, must be consistent. This is not only important for the day-to-day prioritization of roles and responsibilities but is also a critical component in fostering long-term adaptability and resilience.

Ideally, an organization with a clearly defined purpose will attract the kind of professionals who recognize the organization's alignment to their own individual purpose. The greater the alignment of individual and organizational purpose, the more likely the exchange of workplace investment will become long term and mutually rewarding. Unfortunately, however, most interviews focus on the organization's purpose and mission and fail to pursue an understanding of the candidate's individual purpose.

For such a critical aspect of high-performance alignment, organizations should frontload their background and interview processes to assess clarity of individual purpose. As the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior, background investigators may need to revise the kinds of questions being asked and go beyond confirming work history to include questions to diagnose alignment with organizational purpose. High performers are typically not afraid of hard questions and are more likely to be intrigued by queries regarding their purpose as an investment in their potential. Requesting written responses or sharing interview questions about individual purpose also identifies gaps and inconsistencies throughout the background check and interview processes.

Discerning if a candidate is drawn to the team for status or is aligned with the organization's purpose is critical before inviting that person to join the team. Functioning on elite teams frequently requires a level of communication and interpersonal interaction that does not coexist well with ego-driven status seekers. Many training rooms display banners with slogans such as "Check Your Ego at the Door" as an artifact of the organizational culture to temper ego inflation. Setting the tone early for the expectation of alignment between individual and organizational purposes enhances prospects for the culture to be high performing.

Curiosity

High performers have a relentless curiosity that drives them to increase their learning through knowledge acquisition, experience, and reflection. Their curiosity extends to understanding the origin of a particular practice as well as searching for even the smallest ways to make that practice better. Their curiosity drives high performers to seek information from multiple sources, opposing views, different professions, and other cultures. The quest for knowledge includes efforts to increase mental capacity, concentration, and awareness. High performers look for hard questions to ask and expect to be asked hard questions to refine their understanding of what they know and what they still need to learn.

Sharing knowledge and experience becomes a way of incorporating the ideas of others into problem solving. Through sharing, the cognitive diversity of the team becomes inspirational and motivational instead of threatening. Keeping the thread of curiosity alive means that learning new ways of doing things becomes an expectation, not a burden. As a commitment to lifelong learning, this *growth mindset* is a characteristic that promotes adaptability in the highly fluid environments of dangerous situations where high performers are needed most.

High performers flourish in dangerous environments defined by a refined learning process through shared vulnerability, accountability, and willingness to evolve. While most learn more from mistakes than successes, the liability of confessing mistakes often leads to avoidance, coverup, or serial reblaming. High-performing cultures foster an environment in which curiosity and learning from mistakes and a *growth mindset* are valued.[29]

Perseverance

Part of the high performer mindset is an unwavering and optimistic commitment to persevere. In high-risk environments, even the most dangerous situations can be managed through fastidious planning and attention to detail. At the same time, contingency plans are created in anticipation that dynamic and fluid changes may occur underpinned by the constant expectation that each team member will nonetheless persevere.

High-performing cultures and organizations require team members to practice persistence. Teams train together unremittingly to respond in sequence and in concert no matter the situational escalation, adjusting responses up or down as the situation warrants. Perseverance is both an individual and a shared team expectation—giving up is not an option. Perseverance requires the continued pursuit of organizational goals despite obstacles and challenges.

HEARTSET: PASSION + EMOTIONAL EXCELLENCE + TRUST

Passion

If knowing one's purpose is the what, then knowing one's passion is the why. When individuals are so committed to their work that they actively pursue further responsibility and leadership in a high-risk environment, a logical question that remains to be answered is why? Posing why actually leads to a series of why questions:

- Why put oneself in harm's way?
- Why willingly spend time away from family and loved ones?
- Why volunteer to experience training and real-life hardships, inconvenience, and exposure to *in extremis* events, trauma, and pain?

Responses to the intensely personal *why* questions that assess the individual's passion need to be periodically revisited. For some, the answers remain constant from the start of a career until retirement. For others, passion varies and is affected by significant emotional

life events, good and bad. Either way, organizations aspiring to high performance while operating in dangerous situations must understand the passions and motivations of their members. Well-placed passion propels organizations through dark, challenging situations. High performance is at risk when the culture is diluted by weak or misguided passion. Passion properly aligned with individual and collective skillsets yields operational clarity and performance consistent with high-performing cultures.

Grit, which comprises both perseverance and passion,[30] has been studied extensively in the context of pursuing long-term goals. Defined as "passion and sustained persistence applied toward long-term achievement . . . with no particular concern for rewards or recognition along the way,"[31] grit is even more important for organizations seeking high performance in high-risk, high-reward environments. The extraordinary demands of the job—escalating danger, potential loss of life, exposure to human tragedy and suffering—require the organization to have members with extraordinary grit.

Firmly grounded passion and purpose are linked to health and resiliency and help explain how grit enables people to succeed and thrive in dangerous situations. Conversely, the disillusionment associated with the absence of grit can lead to negative mental health outcomes.[32] Knowing one's passion and *why* creates a certainty, confidence, and clarity that minimizes the mental and emotional distraction of questioning one's motivations.

Emotional Excellence

Being intentional about channeling the highs and lows of emotions is critical for every individual who seeks to perform at the highest levels. In dangerous situations, strong emotions can distract from the individual's ability to execute complex and risky maneuvers. Fear, anger, and grief can so completely oversaturate the consciousness that cognitive faculties are rendered ineffective. Previous generations of first responders sought to control unwanted emotions by shutting them off or denying their presence, but those practices were ineffective because they ignored enormously important sources of information about how best to respond to critical incidents. It is important to be able to leverage appropriate emotional resources in a crisis to access emotional motivators such as determination, courage, and honor.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is a concept central to understanding the proper *heartset* for exceeding performance expectations in dangerous situations.[33] EQ incorporates four key components essential to the long-term health and well-being of those working in extreme environments: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Empathy is a critical element of all four areas. Being able to access and apply EQ concepts in everyday interactions is likely to increase self-worth and satisfaction both at work and with interpersonal relationships.

Elite athletes have long used visualization, meditation, and other cognitive enhancement techniques to maximize performance, both physical and mental. Practicing emotional excellence increases cohesion, communication, and trust between teammates in

ways that build high-performing, winning teams. For example, American special operations forces—Navy SEALs and Army Green Berets—are trained in mental resiliency and adaptability to ensure they are not surprised by emotion in the midst of a crisis.[34] Resiliency training is paired with meditation and deep breathing exercises aimed at calming the mind and spirit to maximize clarity. Just as the body requires a physical workout regimen to perform in extreme circumstances, the habits practiced to enhance mental and emotional dexterity also create a greater capacity for clarity and focus in a crisis.[35]

Trust

Trust is an essential element of every relationship, but it is particularly necessary to perform properly in high-risk, high-reward situations. Trust—both given to and earned from others—is fundamental to creating a culture of excellence. Trust is more important than likability when it comes to valuing teammates. See chapter 10 for a deeper exploration of trust.

Stephen Covey's *The Speed of Trust* outlines behaviors associated with high-trust leaders and acknowledges both the strength and the fragility of trust.[36] High performers know that high-risk situations demand leaders with high-trust behaviors. These behaviors are intricately woven into every aspect of organizational life, including daily communications, training, and responses to significant events. The erosion of trust endangers high-performance cultures because it undermines confidence by creating doubt and uncertainty.

When being seen as trustworthy becomes a priority, leaders' choices about communication and messaging become even more important, particularly in the current digital age, which offers plentiful communication options while sometimes limiting content to thirty characters. The daily interplay of communications and actions is critical given the multiple exposures that are needed for most people to develop trust.

Trust is not the same as loyalty, because it involves an element of thorough understanding not required for the latter. Loyalty to a person, purpose, or organization often holds the expectation of allegiance or even *blind* allegiance. History is rife with examples of dogmatic adherence to formal response patterns resulting in disaster.

High-performing teams operating in dangerous situations do not embrace blind loyalty because doing so inhibits the adaptive changes necessary to thrive in fluid, challenging environments. Organizations with blindly loyal followers are cliquish and closed to new ideas, new members, and growth. In contrast, leaders who cultivate trust within their teams and demonstrate trustworthiness create a bond of safety and security for addressing catastrophic events.

SKILLSET: COMPETENCY/MASTERY + AUTONOMY + TEAM

When looking to recruit and retain the right skillset for teams that operate in extremis, recruiters must require a baseline level of intelligence, talent, and aptitude in candidates. These may incorporate various credentials, certifications, or skills that are outlined in a job description as explicit requirements. These standards should not be minimized, because

they establish the foundation for creating and building productivity and proficiency as defined by the work environment.

The term "skillset" refers to the range of abilities required to perform specific tasks; it encompasses what people do as well as the range of acceptable responses within their respective workplace. Different work environments demand specific tasks and baseline skills. The attributes discussed below are baseline skillsets for organizations that operate in dangerous situations. All skillsets should incorporate unusual competence, autonomy, and emphasis on team.

Competency/Mastery

Those who have the right mindset and heartset for high performance tend to apply similar dedication to the development of their skillset. This commitment requires a combination of curiosity, perseverance, and passion to channel efforts into action with the intention of achieving competency and mastery of tasks. Recalling that knowing one's purpose is the what and knowing one's passion the why, the commitment to competency and mastery is the how. Unusual competency and mastery characterize individuals who strive to take their skills to the next level and continuously improve.

High-performing cultures are chock-full of people seeking challenging experiences and purposeful feedback. Even after earning proper certifications and completing required training and education, members of high-performing organizations seek self-improvement through mentors and coaching. They expand their skillset by cross-training and serving on loan to another unit or team. Striving for competency and mastery instead of accepting minimal standards requires repetition, practice, and dedication while avoiding the tendency to believe that seniority or rank alone reflects qualifications.

Leaders who strive to increase their competency and mastery do not have to fake knowing everything about a task, because they know and are willing to admit that they do not. Transparency about the ability to master tasks is valued in high-performing cultures regardless of status or rank. Organizations that function well in extreme situations know which members have mastered tasks and which have not, with the latter requiring more training and education as necessary.

Many hierarchical workplaces lean heavily on seniority for status. For high-performing cultures, however, expertise accrued over time is more significant than time-in-grade. The leaders who role-model mastery of concepts and skills shape a high-performance culture that values performance and ability more than seniority and status. This drive for competency and mastery of skills allows leaders to envision more efficient and responsive solutions at higher levels of leadership and management.

Autonomy

Before discussing the final two components of skillset—autonomy and team—it is important to break from our typical linear thinking. Rather than a straight line, picture

a pendulum anchored in competency/mastery that swings between autonomy and team (see figure 16.2). For each high-performing individual, developing and building skills related to autonomy and team are intricately connected yet separate.

High performers must fully examine and refine their respective individual strengths and weaknesses when developing the skillset their job demands. This examination cannot occur in isolation, because it requires an understanding of how the individual fits into the team. A culture of high performance for organizations performing in dangerous situations demands the seemingly oxymoronic juxtaposition of emphasizing both individual *autonomy* and the *team*.

Put differently, autonomy characterized by independent motivation and success is of no value to and has no place in high-performing cultures if those two attributes do not complement and contribute to the success of the team. This process is dynamic and always in motion given that teams, individuals, and missions change—but a well-established culture of high performance endures. Skillsets expand (or contract) through the reciprocal engagement between the individual and the team.

To contribute to a team and its culture, high performers engage in critical self-assessment and focus on their own skills, abilities, and growth. Though there may be some external influences, the motivational drivers for this work are primarily internal. High performers in organizations that face dangerous situations thrive on the gestalt of mind-body-spirit challenges and study the biology of the human body and human performance. The *in extremis* nature of the operating environment demands that high performers train hard, push their physical and mental limitations, and understand the necessity to fuel the body with adequate nutrition, hydration, and rest to attain optimal performance. The outcome is habituation of behaviors and practices that maximize readiness and the likelihood of successful performance in critical moments.

High performers also recognize that the daily practice of calming their thoughts and emotions pays dividends in a crisis, when clear thinking is essential. Despite being highly skilled physically, successful performance may remain elusive if the individual is hindered by uncontrolled thoughts and unfettered emotions. Many high performers practice meditation, yoga, martial arts, or other mindfulness techniques to keep their emotions under control.[37]

The investment in autonomy returns capital in the ability to identify one's unique reactive response patterns and then demonstrate the initiative necessary to master that internal state. Developing and demonstrating autonomy is not a group activity. For those who enjoy the camaraderie of teamwork and are naturally more extroverted, this discipline may initially seem awkward. It is far better, however, to be the leader who masters calm in the midst of chaos than the reactive leader who storms into action with bravado but no plan.

Team

Organizations with a successful culture for leading and performing in dangerous situations cannot embrace "a culture of one" mentality. Or as President Harry Truman famously

noted: "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit."[38] A high-performing culture requires people and participation, risk and vulnerability, and a range of human emotions with traditions, values, joy, and pain. Working in teams is generally equal parts reward and frustration, and it comes at a price. High-performing cultures demand that members discard purely personal needs for autonomy and embrace what is good for the team, a notion popularized with sayings and mottos such as "There's no 'I' in team" and "TEAM: together everyone achieves more." In high-performance cultures the individual must value the success of the team and the mission more than personal ego gratification.

High performers are energized by contributing to something that is larger than themselves, and organizations operating in dangerous environments embody the opportunity to contribute. The movement from autonomy to team is mutually beneficial when the individual is able to contribute to the team and the team reciprocates by providing opportunities for growth and development within the context of *in extremis* situations. This duality and reciprocation require intentional effort and feedback.

Teams working in high-risk situations spend significant time together in preparation, planning, training, and performance. The intense trust between teammates required for precision under stress leads to strong bonds that project beyond the workplace and last a lifetime. Leaders of high-performing organizations must acknowledge and nurture the norms and traditions surrounding achievements, failures, and losses. It is not just the work the high-performing culture accomplishes that holds significance; it is also the belonging. This belonging manifests profoundly when missions go awry or when teammates experience death, injury, or suicide. These shared experiences become legacy moments for the high performers and help define the organization and its culture.

HOW TO CREATE HIGH-PERFORMING CULTURES

Important as they are, high-performing people are not the only attribute high-performing cultures need. Several other factors contribute to high-performing organizations' ability to cope with and prevail in high-hazard, high-consequence situations.[39] The organization's routine practices, training techniques, and cultural characteristics all play a role as well. Some of these are intuitively obvious, but some are not.

This section describes ten characteristics of high-performing cultures and offers insight regarding how leaders go about the process of creating such cultures. Application of the principles outlined below can create high-functioning organizations across the full spectrum of operating environments. The degree to which these principles prepare organizations confronting *in extremis* situations, however, depends on repetition and refinement of technique. Figure 16.3 summarizes the ten attributes of high-performing cultures.

1. Open and collaborative dialogue are commonplace. Collaborative planning and problem solving—vis-à-vis hierarchical and directive training approaches—are hallmarks of organizations performing well in extreme environments. Open and collaborative

dialogue are key enablers because they eliminate vertical segregation, or "stovepiping," of knowledge and information.[40] This promotes the sharing and development of a uniformly understood awareness of the organization's current status, tasks, and goals. In this culture, team members "cc" others more, not less, during routine communications in the interest of keeping people informed, to gain concurrence, or to inquire about the larger impact of actions being considered by the organization. If this is practiced routinely by all team

01
Open and collaborative dialogue are commonplace.
02
Assumptions are challenged and commonly accepted practices questioned.
03
People are comfortable with ambiguity.
04
The organization's leaders and employees communicate effectively.
05
The organization attacks problems and implements corrective actions.
06
The team focuses on "what's important now (WIN)."
07
The organization's members are aware of their biases, and value logic and reasoning over bad presumptions and cognitive errors.
08
The organization recognizes diversity, in general, and diversity of thought, in particular, is a force multiplier.
09
Humility is a core value.
10
Artifacts match espoused values and are aligned with practical applications indicative of the high-performing culture.

FIGURE 16.3. Ten Attributes of High-Performing Cultures

members, regardless of their status, team members feel free to offer comments, opinions, and suggestions when the team encounters an extreme situation.

2. Assumptions are challenged, and commonly accepted practices are questioned. Organizations can survive for some time operating with the status quo. But organizations with a homeostatic "we've always done it this way" mentality eventually wither away and die. Such organizational inertia cannot withstand the stressors associated with *in extremis* situations. Status quo organizations are ill suited to operate successfully in dynamic, chaotic, and highly volatile situations.

Humans typically derive comfort from routine and familiarity. Put differently, people tend to despise change and uncertainty. Part of the attraction to the inertial mindset is the tribal knowledge associated with accepting things as they are and not questioning routines or practices.[41] Hierarchical organizations such as the military and police forces fall prey to this dynamic but for a different reason: their cultural bias toward obedience to superiors.

However, the very things that make team members comfortable and secure are the instruments of potential downfall for organizations operating in extreme situations. Unpredictable, evolving, high-threat environments cannot be countered with static assumptions and yesterday's tactics and procedures. Planning for *in extremis* situations requires continual evolution and evaluation. Assumptions must be challenged, and accepted practices questioned in order to evolve and stay ahead of threats. While the very notion of planning and training for unpredictable situations appears oxymoronic, high-performing cultures also challenge assumptions and explore better ways of doing things to better prepare the team for extreme environments.

3. People are comfortable with ambiguity. Extending the previous discussion, any organization that exists long enough to develop a set of assumptions about "the way things are done around here" is bound to experience a situation for which its assumptions are invalid. The more an organization challenges and questions accepted norms and practices, the more comfortable it becomes with breaking new ground, implementing new systems and processes, and experiencing change. And the more leaders and members experience change, the more comfortable they become with ambiguity and uncertainty.[42] This is critically important because *in extremis* situations are ambiguous and uncertain. People in high-performing cultures operating in dangerous situations come to embrace uncertainty as normal because it leads to better planning and higher performance.

4. The organization's leaders and employees communicate effectively. An outward sign—an artifact—of how likely an organization is to prevail in an extreme situation is the way members communicate. High-performing organizations practice superior communications across modalities, including telephone calls, texting, emails, voicemails, video teleconferencing, and the increasingly available virtual platforms (Zoom, Teams, Skype, etc.). Leaders and employees know which modality to use as the situation dictates and recognize when time-sensitive urgencies demand immediacy.

Efficacious communications are an essential part of the fabric of every high-performing organization. Part of this efficacy is the practice of engaging in constructive dissent. This is particularly important for organizations working in dangerous environments, because homogeneity of thought and conflict avoidance often lead to groupthink, and that can lead to catastrophe.[43] Good communications flow up and down the chain of responsibility and between individual and organizational peers.

5. The organization attacks problems and implements corrective actions. High-performing organizations working in dangerous situation have a "culture of continuous improvement." Popularized through the work of Edward Deming and related to management approaches such as Total Quality Management, Lean Manufacturing, and Six Sigma,[44] continuous improvement involves much more than an earnest desire to perform better. This commitment to improvement requires a structured lessons-learned and corrective-actions process.[45] While most corrective actions tend to be small and relatively easy to implement, the accumulation of corrections has a huge impact on day-to-day operations and thinking.

The process of identifying problems and implementing corrections is not a lockstep, mechanical exercise conducted only because management requires it. A meaningful corrections process—often referred to as an after-action review—addresses four key questions: What were the intended results? What were the actual results? What caused the results? And what will the organization sustain or improve?[46]

6. The team focuses on "what's important now." Members of high-performing cultures have the ability to focus on "what's important now (WIN)," meaning they are able to identify the top priority and stick to it during challenging, difficult situations.[47] Sometimes referred to as "the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing,"[48] this quality is better demonstrated and modeled by the organization's leaders than learned through study or reading. Staying focused on "the main thing" during a crisis or extreme situation is not a natural response for most people.[49] When faced with distractions and stimuli that challenge human cognitive capacities, training, practice, and repetition are necessary to develop the discipline and habits necessary to exceed performance expectations.

Legendary college football coach Lou Holtz reportedly instructed his players to ask themselves "What's important now?" thirty-five times a day.[50] He did this as a means of training players to focus on what mattered most at any given place and time. This single-minded focus is indicative of high-performing cultures.

7. The organization's members are aware of their biases and value logic and reasoning over bad presumptions and cognitive errors. Leaders of high-performing organizations are not satisfied with team members' simply challenging the status quo or with encouraging intellectual curiosity. They coach team members to apply disciplined thinking and logic in order to acknowledge biases, solve problems, and develop action plans to improve the organization's performance. Leaders of high-performing organizations resist the human propensity to oversimplify—known as the oversimplification fallacy—and encourage layered, nuanced, and creative thinking.[51]

The ability to overcome bad presumptions and cognitive errors is a skill that takes time and patience to develop. Education and training help members to analyze and recognize their own flawed tendencies and to discover how their unacknowledged biases can adversely affect satisfactory performance. High-performing organizations understand that the way humans cognitively organize data via heuristics—representativeness, anchoring and adjustment, and availability—affects how plans, assessments, and operations are conducted.[52]

8. The organization recognizes that diversity in general, and diversity of thought in particular, are force multipliers. Complex problems require diverse skills from a diverse workforce to solve. And problems confronting organizations working in dangerous situations are among the most complex to solve. Organizations operating *in extremis* do well in an environment of diversified knowledge, skills, abilities, and thinking.

A difficult human tendency to overcome—perhaps even more than the need for stability and the desire to oversimplify complex situations—is the need for acceptance and affirmation. Because like attracts like, acceptance and affirmation can yield a workforce that disproportionally reflects the leader—that is, what the leader looks like, who the leader *is*, and how the leader thinks—instead of what the *organization needs* to succeed in dangerous situations.

Known as homosocial reproduction, this concept refers to the tendency of incumbents to recruit, select, retain, and promote members of the organization who are socially and professionally similar.[53] This phenomenon can doom organizations operating *in extremis*. Groupthink sets in quickly in such an environment, and the organization eventually becomes paralyzed and incapable of navigating through even mildly challenging situations without negative consequences.

Discussions of diversity rarely consider diversity of thought, but for members of organizations operating in dangerous situations, benefits associated with a diverse team's varied backgrounds, experiences, education, and thinking are essential for high performance.

9. Humility is a core value. Done properly, corrective actions and after-action reviews help build a culture of humility within the organization. Everyone in the organization—from the most senior leader to the lowest-paid worker—eventually experiences an issue that merits entry into the corrective actions system. This correction drives change and improvement, large and small. Periodic discussion and review of corrective actions informs members that everyone on the team is accountable to the organization's standards, and that all issues receive prompt attention. In this way, humility reinforces a culture of development by legitimizing learning and personal development. Humility also encourages transparency, openness, trust, and recognition, which are important precursors to components of high performance.[54]

10. Artifacts match espoused values and are aligned with practical applications indicative of the high-performing culture. Cultures work best when artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions are all in alignment. In Scheinian terms, mismatches

between an organization's artifacts (what the senses experience), espoused values (what the organization says it values), and basic underlying assumptions (what the organization actually does) undermine the very essence of high performance that the organizational culture seeks to create. Misalignment and mismatches create doubt and cause people to question the organization's raison d'être and authenticity. This disconnection between artifacts, espoused values, and basic underlying assumptions results in cynicism among the organization's members and suboptimal performance. Left unchecked or uncorrected, this cynicism can manifest in all sorts of negative ways, particularly when those same members are faced with extreme situations.

This characteristic of high-performing cultures could easily have been listed at the beginning of this discussion. Leaving alignment until the end, however, underscores the point that every quality listed before it can be completely undone by mismatches between levels of culture and the toxic doubt misalignment creates.

TRAINING, SHAPING, AND ENHANCING CULTURE

The preceding section outlined the qualities of high-performing cultures that permit organizations working in extreme situations to thrive. We turn now to explaining how one goes about embedding and reinforcing these high-performance cultural characteristics into organizations. Before we continue, a significant point is worth amplifying: the foundations for a high-performing culture that can deal effectively with extreme situations are laid in the day-to-day business of the organization.

There is, in fact, no special methodology for embedding and reinforcing cultural characteristics for organizations operating *in extremis*. Rather, these skills are practiced every day and "baked into the cake" until they are highly refined and taken for granted. The key is to develop a sort of organizational culture muscle memory that activates during high-stress, high-stakes, high-consequence events.

Leaders go about the process of creating high-performing cultures for organizations operating in dangerous situations in the following ways.

- ***Assess and diagnose.*** Before any organization can begin a process of inculcating cultural change, it first needs to understand what needs to change. Only then can it determine where it needs to go and how to get there. Your organization may have formal processes and tools in place that can be leveraged to gauge the organization's climate and relative strengths and weaknesses. These tools include climate surveys; command information briefings, or "tailgate" sessions; external evaluations (e.g., formal assessment out-briefs or after-action reviews [AARs]); and inspections. There are also informal tools such as small-unit training exercises conducted internally, tabletop exercises, and counseling sessions. Reviewing AARs from previous evaluations or inspections can also help diagnose what part of a culture needs to change.

- ***Establish expectations and standards.*** Leaders must first decide what behaviors and minimum standards they want their employees to demonstrate. These are not to be confused with performance expectations. Most companies already have goal-setting and performance review systems. Rather, it is important for leaders to tell subordinates *how* they want business conducted—what is acceptable, and what is not. Without these behavioral guardrails, employees will naturally seek the path of least resistance even under routine circumstances. When confronted with the stress of an extreme situation, human beings will default to their base habits. If no such expectations have been explained, established, and reinforced, the organization's ability to exceed performance expectations in extreme situations will be severely hampered. Some examples for establishing expectations and standards include:
  1. A simple leader's philosophy—published and distributed to all team members—can be helpful but is not necessary in all situations.
  2. Clearly established tasks, conditions, and standards for every activity are crucial for acceptable training. Do not conduct training evolutions without these building blocks firmly in place.
  3. Build scripts—branches and sequels—and ambiguous situations into training exercises to generate discussion during the AARs. Gauge the training audience's response to the situation against your expectations. Retrain as necessary to reinforce the desired outcome.
- ***Align systems and processes.*** It is important to assess whether procedures and processes are consistent with and supportive of the organization's mission, vision, goals, and strategy. The assessment determines which systems and processes need to be revised, which are best removed or deleted, which need to be simplified, and which could be automated. Mission-critical systems and processes crucial to organizational success are identified, prioritized, and addressed first. Here are specific things to do:
  1. "Tabletop" your procedure set and crosswalk them with other procedures or processes.
  2. Identify the gaps in your procedures and processes. Assign responsibility to individuals for producing draft copies of new procedures and standard operating procedures. Conduct the review and validation of the new procedures as a collective unit.
  3. Identify and either modify or eliminate "wasted effort"—extraneous or overly prescriptive procedures that hamper creative thinking in an extreme environment.
  4. Identify procedures or processes that directly conflict with others. Modify or delete them.

- ***Put the right people in the right seat on the bus***. Straight from Jim Collins' *Good to Great* playbook, it will be necessary to move employees to positions better matched to their particular skillsets, mindsets, and heartsets.[55] More than that, it will be necessary to remove people from the organization altogether. Collins noted that this is particularly true for organizations facing *in extremis* situations: "When facing chaos and uncertainty, you cannot possibly predict what's coming around the corner, your best 'strategy' is to have a busload of people who can adapt to and perform brilliantly no matter what comes next."[56]
  1. Continually assess performance of personnel on training exercises and during the conduct of routine operations.
  2. Identify relative strengths and weaknesses.
  3. Assign people to "seats on the bus" accordingly.
  4. Assignment criteria may be situational—adjust your approach as necessary based on the mission set or anticipated environment.
- ***Periodically reassess and readjust***. Plan to reassess the organization on a predetermined schedule to gauge the effectiveness of initiatives put in place. Realize that no plan is perfect, or, as Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke put it, "no plan survives contact with the enemy."[57] One does well to anticipate inadequacies of original plans and understand that the dynamic, unforeseen nature of *in extremis* situations requires adjustments. Unexpected developments, unforeseen friction points, serendipity or bad luck, weather, and myriad other variables dictate periodic reassessment and adjustment. Happily, part of the readjustment is the likely discovery of previously unknown abilities and talents of high performers that can be brought to bear on the improvement plan. Such adjustments help build momentum and increase the bond of trust between the leader and the led. Use the tools discussed previously to guide reassignment decisions, update desired goals, make adjustments to the training progression, update procedures, and modify training scenarios.
- ***Train and coach leaders***. Even before developing the roadmap for achieving high performance while operating in dangerous situations, leaders must commit to training themselves as well. Design training events that purposefully put the members of the organization into ambiguous and unusual situations. Small-scale situational training exercises work very well for this purpose. Between iterations of a given scenario, make changes to the environment or the unit's task organization, reduce the time available to key leaders, or reduce the number of resources or leaders available to the team. There are certain habits that leaders of high-performing organizations must develop and internalize for the process to work. These are *everyday* habits of leadership, not just behaviors demanded by *in extremis* environments. These habits should all be part of the ultimate goals of the training scenarios:

- Learn how to define a problem correctly.
- Seek the facts. If gaps persist, identify what information is still required and assign responsibilities to gather more facts.
- Involve all direct reports and leaders from support organizations in routine meetings and planning sessions. Not only will the collaboration enhance communication and planning, the familiarity developed among the members of the team will pay dividends during *in extremis* events.
- Learn to take bad news well—and do not shoot the messenger. One bruised and battered messenger scuttles future communication authenticity.
- Learn how to deliver—and coach subordinates how to deliver—an initial report to a supervisor in the immediate aftermath of an event. Stick to the facts, avoid speculation, and provide a brief description and actions being taken. A rubric includes:
  - —This is an initial report.
  - —This is what happened.
  - —This is what we know.
  - —This is what we do not know.
  - —These were the immediate responses and actions.
  - —Describe the assistance required.
- Learn not to confuse action with effectiveness. Frequently activity and action are mistaken for actual progress toward achieving goals.

- ***Train and coach team members.*** As leaders move organizations through the process of embedding and reinforcing characteristics of high-performing cultures through training and in the formation of good everyday habits, development of all team members' ability to perform leader-level tasks is crucial to the team's ability to perform in the most extreme environments. When planning training exercises, take into account the following goals as you develop the scenarios you will use.
  - *Teach people to think.* Use real-world situations encountered by other organizations to illustrate the disciplined thought processes required to handle *in extremis* situations.[58]
    - —Coach team members to always seek truth and facts, no matter how damaging.
    - —Teach team members to use facts to draw hypotheses and to resist giving in to biases and jumping to conclusions. Knowing that a crisis is often a fight for accurate information, instill the good habit of seeking facts and acknowledging what is known and what is not known in a situation.
    - —Demonstrate the value of seeking alternative points of view.
    - —Teach employees how to properly define the problem.

- *Train humility and self-critique.* Use everyday events and processes as part of a corrective actions system to examine, teach, and coach in a positive way. Doing so becomes a part of the organization's system of shared habits integral to producing successful outcomes in extreme situations.
  - —Self-critique and self-examination are critical to this dynamic and focus employees on improvement and learning.
  - —Accepting "I don't know" as a legitimate answer during a developing crisis helps focus the pursuit of information necessary for proper planning and decision making.
- *Bring people together and treat every issue as an opportunity to work through the problem.* A great technique is to intentionally form a nonstandard team to develop a solution to one of the more complex issues facing the organization. Extraordinary problems require extraordinary teams. Nonstandard teams typically identify unique solutions not envisioned by traditional teams.

- ***Communicate often and repeat the message over and over again***. Simple themes and messages repeated often are effective in framing what the organization aspires to be. Team members are unlikely to remember or inculcate overly complex, detailed, and complicated vision statements or long lists of principles. Keep statements about mission, vision, values, goals, end states, and other framing mnemonics as short and simple as possible to convey the intent without belaboring it. High-performing organizations operate well with clear, concise messaging that conveys practical guidance and intent. Reviewing messaging frequently helps to ensure consistency and continuity and helps high performers understand what is important.
- ***Settle in for the long haul***. Leaders must assign time frames for reaching goals and the specified and implied tasks that accompany them. Part of this process is constructing the performance metrics that will be tracked and reported, as well as the frequency of reporting on these metrics. *What* the organization measures is as important as *how* and *how often*. The intent is to measure specific indicators relevant to assessing how the organization will perform in dangerous situations. While it may not be possible to accurately predict an organization's ability to function during *in extremis* events, the aggregation of these metrics provides a gauge to assess the readiness and relative preparation of an organization and how it might perform.
- ***Study what other similar organizations and competitors are doing***. Benchmarking the techniques employed by other relevant organizations is a valuable and often underused tool to help gain insights into "what works" and bring about changes in the organization. There are as many ways to achieve the various components of culture discussed in this chapter as there are organizations that achieve them. It is

important to remember that (1) other organizations have already embarked upon similar journeys, and (2) an "approved solution" does not exist—meaning that one must find what works for the particular team in question given the collection of individual personalities, strengths, and weaknesses. It is much more efficient to start with a template of another organization's plans and make adjustments than it is to struggle through the drill of forming a unique plan from a blank slate.

In summary, an organization's culture creates the environment to facilitate bringing the right people into the organization, character development, courageous performance of duty, effective stress management and meaning making by its members, empowered decision making and initiative taking, resilience, building trust internally and with key external stakeholders, exemplary leadership, healthy morale, learning, and the ability to adapt. Leaders and members at all levels are responsible for reinforcing and enhancing the organization's culture on a daily basis. The tools and best practices outlined in this chapter equip all members with the means to be positive culture reinforcers and enhancers.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Changing culture is a long, slow, deliberate process. There are no quick fixes. One cannot just hire a new leader or director and expect the person to show up with a new culture in hand. It's not a cut-and-paste operation.
2. Leaders reflect the cultures that created and appointed them. Put differently, people who best represent the existing, approved culture are recognized and promoted into leadership positions because they most perfectly represent that culture. Leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin.
3. Foster an environment of trust where curiosity, diversity of thought, and humility are valued. Encourage a culture in which the status quo is challenged and the self-examination of daily events provides the opportunity for a growth mindset to flourish throughout the organization.
4. Think beyond the skillset to the mindset and the heartset. Be sure to reinforce the individual purpose and passion that are in alignment with the team and organizational mission, vision, and values. The more synergy between the individual, the team, and the organization, the more likely a high-performance culture will be generated.
5. It is important to realize that changing a culture does not mean discarding all parts of the existing culture. Those practices, procedures, beliefs, systems, behaviors, and norms that fit the aspirational culture should be retained and incorporated into the new culture. This makes it much easier for the change agent to get buy-in from the existing team.

6. Vision, direction, and messaging must be consistent and enforced with unwavering accountability for those who undermine the new direction or hold on to past practices. Hold accountable those who resist and reward those who adopt the changes. Otherwise, holdouts entrenched in past practices and beliefs will continue to adversely influence and confuse subsequent generations.
7. To create a high-performance culture, start with the end state in mind. Clearly specify what behaviors and characteristics the organization aspires to in order to successfully perform in the most extreme situations. Define what right looks like and address misalignment.
8. Rethink your training to include much more than drills or rote memorization of procedures. Deliberately weave complex scenarios into training exercises that challenge leaders and rank and file to think, reason, and question. Train to address the butterflies in the stomach.

NOTES

1. The introductory vignette was compiled from several law enforcement cases. Names and locations are fictitious and omitted to ensure anonymity and privacy.
2. Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992). The text is uniformly regarded as one of the most influential texts in the rich history intellectual history of culture and leadership. See later editions of the text for additional content, including: Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010); and Edgar H. Schein and Peter Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2017).
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4. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (London: Routledge, 1952).
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6. Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 279.
7. W. Richard Scott, *Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1987), 63.
8. Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman Jr., *In Search of Excellence* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).
9. Peters and Waterman, *In Search of Excellence*, 77.
10. Linda Smircich, "Concepts of Culture and Organizational Analysis," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1983): 339–358.
11. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2010), 2–3.
12. Donald H. Horner Jr., Luann P. Pannell, and Dennis W. Yates, "Creating a Culture for Leading and Performing in the Extreme," in *Leadership in Dangerous Situations: A Handbook for the Armed Forces, Emergency Services, and First Responders*, ed. Patrick J. Sweeney, Michael D. Matthews, and Paul B. Lester (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press: 2011), 317.
13. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (1992), 16.
14. Content for figure 16.1 is taken from Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2010), 24. The drawing is taken from an unpublished working paper at the U.S. Army War College: Stephen J. Gerras, Leonard Wong, and Charles D. Allen, "Organizational Culture: Applying a Hybrid Model to the U.S. Army" (2008).

15. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (1992), 17.
16. Richard L. Daft, *Organization Theory and Design,* 10th ed. (Mason, OH: South-Western, 2010), 375.
17. Schein used the term "espoused values." We find "norms and values" equally descriptive of the processes involved.
18. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (1992), 2.
19. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2010), 27–28.
20. Chris Argyris, *Overcoming Organizational Defenses* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), 13.
21. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2010), 29.
22. John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).
23. Kotter, *Leading Change,* 15.
24. This is well documented. See, for example, Manav Seth, "The Science of High Performance," *People Matters* (October 10, 2019), https://www.peoplemattersglobal.com/article/leadership-development/the-science-of-high-performing-organizations-23386; Vikram Bhalla, Jean-Michel Caye, Andrew Dyer, Lisa Dymond, Yves Morieux, and Paul Orlander, "High Performance Organizations: The Secrets of Their Success," *High Performance Organizations* (September 1, 2011), https://www.bcg.com/publications/2011/high-performance-organizations-secrets-of-success; M. J. Wriston, "Creating a High Performance Culture," *Organization Development Journal* 25 (March 2007): 8–16.
25. J. R. Katzenbach and D. K. Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams: Creating the High Performance Organization* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).
26. Jim Collins and Bill Lazier, *Beyond Entrepreneurship 2.0: Turning Your Business into an Enduring Great Company* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020).
27. "Heartset" is used here instead of "heart-set" to be more consistent with the terms "mindset" and "skill-set." Robin S. Sharma offered this description of heartset: "A high performing human being is operating at excellence mentally. He/she is focusing on superb thoughts and has a great attitude. But that's only half of it. He/she is also showing up at work and at home with a wide-open heart. 'Heartset' is all about delivering value to her clients and inspiring her co-workers and modeling empathy/kindness and caring." See "What's Your Heartset," https://www.robinsharma.com/article/what-s-your-heartset; and Robert S. Sharma, *The World Changer's Manifesto* (Luzern, Switz.: Titan Academy Global, 2019).
28. Examples include Brendan Burchard's *High Performance Habits* (2017); Clotaire Rapaille, *The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups* (2006); Mark D. Divine, *Unbeatable Mind* (2015); Jim Collins, *Good to Great*, and Gavin De Becker, *The Gift of Fear* (1997).
29. See Carol S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2016).
30. Grit is a popular current research topic. We consulted Angela Duckworth, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Persistence* (New York: Scribner, 2016); Angela L. Duckworth, Abigail Quirk, Robert Gallop, Rick H. Hoyle, Dennis R. Kelly, and Michael D. Matthews, "Cognitive and Noncognitive Predictors of Success," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States* 47 (November 19, 2019): 23499–23504; Kristen Weir, "The Gritty Truth: A New Study Undergirds the Importance of Grit in Human Success—and Highlights the Need for More Research on Other Noncognitive Attributes that Enable Us to Reach Our Goals," *American Psychological Association* (January 28, 2020), https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/01/gritty-truth.
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32. Duckworth, *Grit*.
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35. Divine, *Unbeatable Mind*.
36. Stephen M. R. Covey and Rebecca R. Merrill, *The Speed of Trust* (New York: Random House, 2006).
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CHAPTER 17

Choosing the Elite

Recruiting, Assessing, and Selecting Leaders for Dangerous Contexts

OLE BOE AND EVERETT SPAIN

The Context: A Norwegian Army Special Forces Team in Action

The Norwegian Army Special Forces team sitting in the speeding MH-47D Chinook helicopter had rigorously prepared themselves for this mission to capture leaders of the Taliban militants in a remote area of Afghanistan. The low-level flight toward their drop-off point was bumpy and uncomfortable. The loadmaster gave the signal indicating ten minutes to drop-off. The team leader turned on his global positioning system (GPS) tracking device and reviewed the infiltration route one more time. The team then made the necessary final equipment checks. When the loadmaster indicated one minute to drop-off, the pilots decreased the speed of the helicopter and the team grabbed their heavy rucksacks by the carrying handles and prepared to drag them toward the rear ramp of the helicopter. As the Chinook touched down on the drop-off point, the loadmaster got down on one knee, turned around, and commanded, "Gå, gå, gå (Go, go, go)!" Carrying their equipment, the team hustled down the ramp and formed a small perimeter around the Chinook, facing away from the hot whirlwind of dust and small rocks sent airborne by the heavy rotor wash. The Chinook lifted off and disappeared into the darkness, and the fury of noise, wind, and heat gave way to eerie silence. The team leader knew that they were now on their own, deep in territory held by militants who wanted to capture, torture, and kill them. The team leader focused on the job to be done, and the team started moving. The mission had begun.

INTRODUCTION

EXPERIENCES LIKE THIS place a heavy mental and physical burden on military personnel who operate in unfamiliar and dangerous areas, and even more on those who lead

them. Leaders who regularly operate in extreme environments where physical danger is a regular part of the context are referred to as *in extremis* leaders.[1] *In extremis* leaders are not unique to the military. First responders and emergency services teams also serve and operate in extreme environments where different aspects of physical danger are a regular part of their context.

The Norwegian Army Special Operations Forces (FSK) fought in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). FSK operators have been decorated with the Presidential Unit Citation—the U.S. military's most prestigious award given to a unit in a combat zone—for their contributions in Afghanistan.[2] The size, specifics, and capabilities of the FSK remain classified.

This chapter examines the recruitment, assessment, and selection processes for the FSK and the recently updated assessment and selection programs for U.S. Army SOF soldiers and U.S. Army battalion commanders. It concludes by integrating lessons learned and applying them to other organizations that operate in *in extremis* situations. Whether they are soldiers, first responders, or police officers, all of these people need capable and well-trained leaders.

Looking to develop the World War II–era optimal method of selecting operators for these unconventional missions, Col. William J. Donovan, U.S. Army, the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), asked a group of well-regarded psychologists to advise commanders about the best practices for recruiting, assessing, and selecting these elite men and women. *The Assessment of Men* recounts Donovan's program, aspects of which are still used today at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS).[3] The U.S. Army SOF are the quiet professionals born from the OSS's model.

RECRUITMENT

Imagine that you are the leader of the team dropped off by the Chinook in Afghanistan. You look around at your team and see others much like yourself. Where did you find them? How did you convince them to follow you on such a mission?

Norwegian FSK operators come from all classes of society.[4] Most Norwegian citizens are drafted when they turn seventeen. Those found qualified for military service are called to attend an in-person screening where they are assessed through a series of physical and mental tests to determine which roles they are qualified to join. Many conscripts volunteer for the additional screening and training required to join the Norwegian Army's Airborne Rangers, yet only 4–5 percent of these applicants make it through the selection and training required.[5] Those who do and successfully serve as Airborne Rangers for one year are typically strong candidates for entering the FSK training and qualification courses.

What sort of people make it through this rigorous assessment, selection, and training pipeline? The FSK wants operators with varied backgrounds, interests, and competencies who can build excellent teams and accomplish complex missions. Applicants for the FSK

include young soldiers who come straight from their compulsory year of military service, professional soldiers with many years already in uniform, citizens with advanced civilian academic degrees, competitive athletes, and skilled civilian workers. Desired relevant skills range from language and computer skills to motor sports and drone flying. Service in the FSK places very high demands on professionalism, skills mastery, and collaboration skills. An operator must have significant mental and physical resilience and perseverance. He or she must be able to perform excellently under significant stress and strain, must be curious and able to absorb learning quickly—and must be able to put the needs of the squad or patrol first.[6] Curiosity, the ability to learn quickly, and perseverance are important character strengths for an operator. Some candidates are extremely structured and prefer to plan in detail, while others prefer to wait until the last moment with most life tasks. Since candidates need to take what they have learned and put it into action immediately, the FSK searches for candidates who learn quickly, are open to new experiences (measured via a personality test), and love to learn. The FSK also seeks candidates with high general

TABLE 17.1

Minimum Physical Requirements to Attend Norwegian FSK Assessment and Selection

Pull-ups: *8 repetitions (reps)*	Grip bar with straight arms. Pull the body up and hook chin over the bar. The arms should be straight between each repetition and the body should hang calmly between each lift.
Push-ups: *45 reps*	Lying prone, place hands shoulder width apart. Straight body and straight arms in the upper position. Lower the body so the chest touches the floor. Push the body up until arms are fully extended. Breaks of more than 3 seconds are not allowed.
Abdominal bends (sit-ups): *50 reps in 2 minutes (min)*	Lying with legs at a 90-degree angle, sit up and alternately touch right/left elbow to opposite knee. The fingers should stay interlaced behind the head.
Back lift: *25 reps*	Lying on a box with the hips on the edge and the hands behind the head. Roll up slowly to a horizontal position (5 sec).
Swimming: *400 m in 11 min*	Free-style technique. Start with a dive, then swim the first 25 meters underwater. Outfit: swimwear.
Running with pauses: *32 rounds of 15 m × 7 m × 15 m × 7 m square in 10 min*	On the first long side, the person stops and places his or her body in a push-up position with the chest touching the ground, then gets up and starts running again. On the second long side, the person stops and lies on his or her back with shoulders touching the ground, then gets up and starts running again. Acrobatic rolls to achieve this are not allowed. The person must complete 32 rounds around the 15 m × 7 m square in 10 minutes.
Field march: *30 km in less than 4 hours and 40 min*	Basic equipment and rucksack of 22 kg (48.5 lb), not including weapon and 2 liters of water and food (approx. 28 kg, or 61.7 lb total). Sportswear and hiking boots. Full-coverage sports trousers/ tights.

intelligence, accurate reality testing, and good psychomotor skills.[7] Being able to handle the unknown and the unknowable, and the ability to handle significant stress over time were crucial components of the physical and psychological makeup of our FSK operator and team leader in Afghanistan.

Research on paratrooper aspirants revealed these individuals to be very gifted people.[8] A special forces operator needs to be an individualist and a good team player at the same time, and also needs the self-confidence to believe that he or she can accomplish the mission.[9]

FSK candidates must be Norwegian citizens who have successfully completed their one year of compulsory military service. In addition, they must have scored at least a five (out of nine possible) on a test of general conceptual ability (candidates who score a four may get the opportunity to retest) and nine (out of nine possible) on a mental health screening. They cannot have a criminal record (as measured by a police report) or anything else in their past that would prevent them from receiving a security clearance. Finally, candidates cannot wear eyeglasses or corrective lenses and must be able to meet the challenging baseline physical fitness requirements (see table 17.1).

Once a candidate has gained entry into the FSK assessment, the assessment process itself is highly selective, with a dropout/failure rate as high as 90 percent. The few who make it through and qualify as an FSK operator have opportunities for advanced civilian education up to a master's level in SOF-related disciplines.[10] The selection process extends over two years. The first year involves selection and training as a FSK operator in various SOF specialties. Upon successful completion of that first year, the candidate is given a trial year as a FSK operator in the operational squadron.

ASSESSMENT

What kind of man or woman emerges when he or she is faced with great adversity? Former U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt said, "The boy who is going to make a great man . . . must not make up his mind merely to overcome a thousand obstacles, but to win in spite of a thousand . . . defeats."[11] Every candidate who enters the SOF selection period is given the opportunity to demonstrate the ability to learn, work as part of a team, and maintain motivation through intense physical and psychological challenges. Candidates begin the assessment process as equals. There is no regard for rank, experience, or connections. Many of those who complete the assessment phase report that the program was the most difficult test of their lives. This is because the psychological stressors of unpredictability, physical discomfort, fatigue, and constant evaluation over many weeks test the fortitude of each candidate. It is in this environment where people slowly rise to the top and stand out among their peers.

Candidates do not know how and when they are being observed. Events and tests generally are not what they seem, and candidates are constantly reminded that they are "always being assessed." This fact is even more pronounced during the assessment of team events, which are designed to evaluate how well each candidate can work with others to

accomplish a task. Specifically, they are assessed on how well they plan, communicate their plan, adjust to changing conditions, accomplish the task, and lead by example—all while under stress. Candidates are not necessarily judged on whether they finish a task; it is their approach and how they organize the effort that matters. Additionally, candidates are judged on how well they *follow* the leader. In some tasks the cadre do not identify a leader.[12] The leaderless tasks helped evaluators determine who in the group has the needed leadership and follower skills.

The team assessment events also give evaluators insight into peer-to-peer relationships. Peer evaluations are another tool used to view a candidate's performance within the group. Fellow candidates are often able to provide very useful feedback about their peers. While some critics claim that peer evaluations measure only "popularity," there is evidence that peer evaluations provide useful feedback to individuals about their performance, including specific information about what they can improve about their behavior.[13] Peer evaluations reflect a unique dynamic of a SOF unit: the ability to accept and give blunt and practical feedback.

SELECTION

The selection phase that follows the recruitment and assessment phases is an extensive process that incorporates the experiences, practices, and knowledge that FSK operators, officers, and psychologists have accumulated over the years. The FSK's three-week initial assessment and selection phase incorporates many of the elements found in the U.S. Army Special Forces Assessment and Selection program (SFAS) to test potential candidates' physical and mental stamina.

The FSK commander reviews each candidate's qualifications and performance records from the recruitment and assessment phases, then balances his judgment with the input of other senior SOF leaders and support personnel serving as a selection board. This board consists of current and former FSK unit commanders, command sergeants major, and staff officers. From time to time, a psychologist may also be present. While the psychologist and other board members are asked for input and have the power to influence the decision, the commander retains the authority to make the ultimate decision regarding the selection or rejection of each candidate.

Identifying candidates who may not be a good fit for the job of FSK operator is also part of the selection process. This is important in other high-risk organizations as well, as Guion and Highhouse noted in their seminal work *Essentials of Personnel Assessment and Selection*. Weeding out the candidates who will not match the organization's needs can be crucial, because a single wrongly selected individual may doom a mission to failure. Guion and Highhouse explained that "results of wise decisions can range from the mere absence of problems to genuinely excellent outcomes promoting organizational purposes [while] . . . consequences of unwise decisions can range from inconvenience to disaster."[14] As leading in dangerous contexts is qualitatively different from leading in non-dangerous

contexts because of the unique psychological, social, and organizational demands of such situations, this is relevant for other high-risk occupations as well.

As in the British Special Air Service (SAS), most of the FSK selection process is conducted by experienced FSK officers who have experienced challenges similar to the ones that future FSK operators will face.[15] They generally know what traits and characteristics to look for in potential candidates. However, making selection and training decisions with only experienced operators has risks. Selection board members or evaluators may be prone to reward potential candidates who are similar to themselves (i.e., homophily bias: "they are similar to me and therefore must be good candidates"), and as a result may inaccurately score them higher than more objectively qualified candidates. Therefore, selection board members and evaluators should receive regular antibias training, and a few outsiders should be part of the selection process to offer an outsider's perspective.

SOF instructors look for particular character strengths in candidates.[16] Character strengths can be developed through increased vigilance and effort, and exist along with objectives, interests, and values.[17] This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Unfortunately, even when rigorous recruitment, assessment, and selection processes are in place, occasional selection errors still occur. Those few who are mistakenly selected to enter the FSK without the requisite qualities are typically identified by their fellow SOF members and removed from further training and operations by their commanders.

Years of recruiting, assessing, and selecting *in extremis* operators and leaders for the FSK have established the following lessons:

Humans are more important than equipment. No matter what technology presents, the individual operator's ability to master and use that technology is critical. Yet the abilities to solve problems, learn and use a foreign language, and build relationships with indigenous populations are more important than the newest weapon system, the fastest computer program, or the most capable long-range surveillance optics. With these basic intellectual, character, and physical skills, SOF operators can excel in any kind of environment. The SOF community needs individuals who can perform when help does not arrive in time and be able to continue in the face of potential failure.

Quality is more important than quantity (SOF operators cannot be mass-produced). The need for SOF forces is outpacing the SOF forces available, but training cannot be rushed. Individual attention, coaching, mentoring, and learning take time. Soldiers who show integrity and the ability to resist temptation and avoid negative life events are highly regarded. At the same time, high energy, adventurous, and often risk-taking behaviors are equally regarded. Individuals who push limits are acceptable if they demonstrate an awareness of boundaries and self-regulation. Individuals learn during the assessment phase to seek and accept constant scrutiny from their subordinates, peers, and superiors. This habit forces them to always perform their best regardless of the circumstances and is a hallmark trait of an elite operator.

Competent SOF operators cannot be created quickly after emergencies occur. SOF operators must be available and ready to perform their job at any time. Therefore, it is crucial for the "pipeline" of SOF to continue to feed the operational units with qualified and trained men and women. Since only a small percentage of SOF candidates successfully complete the extensive assessment, selection, and training processes, and those who do are subject to a rigorous lifestyle, SOF operational units can be undermanned.[18] Civilian organizations vying to hire SOF operators' rare talents into the security industry exacerbate the situation. Therefore, SOF forces should prioritize and pay special attention to recruiting and retention during training and beyond.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Organizations such as the armed forces and emergency services (e.g., first responders) need to select and train individuals with specific character strengths and virtues.[19] In their book *Character Strengths and Virtues*, Peterson and Seligman recognized twenty-four specific character strengths organized under six overarching virtues. For instance, the virtue courage includes the character strengths bravery (valor), persistence (perseverance, industriousness), integrity (authenticity, honesty), and vitality (zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy). Courage is a fundamental quality for every military leader because it entails emotional strengths that involve the exercise of the will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal.[20] Peterson and Seligman's character strength classification system has been further refined over the past ten years (see table 17.2).[21] Military doctrines of the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada all emphasize the importance of character strengths.[22]

Western military organizations seem to have remarkably similar notions of which character strengths are most important. These include teamwork, integrity, leadership, persistence, love of learning, and self-regulation.[23] In a comparison of military servicemembers in Norway and the United States with civilians, military servicemembers scored higher on the character strengths of integrity, hope, bravery, industry, and teamwork.[24] Young Americans who showed an interest in attending a U.S. service academy displayed a set of values consistent with U.S. military doctrine, including honesty,

TABLE 17.2
Important Character Strengths for Operating in Dangerous Contexts

Courage	Persistence	Integrity
Teamwork	Leadership	Openness to learning
Fairness	Vitality	Industry
Resilience	Selflessness	Self-regulation
Optimism	Honesty	

bravery, teamwork, industry, and fairness among their top ten character strengths.[25] See chapter 2 for a detailed exploration of character strengths.

COGNITIVE AND NONCOGNITIVE FACTORS THAT ENHANCE PERFORMANCE

Personality traits have been shown to predict job performance in many occupations, although their usefulness is somewhat limited when it comes to predicting success in high-risk (including *in extremis*) occupations.[26] However, almost all of the current tests and measures used to assess SFAS candidates have been shown to be significant predictors of selection for training following the SFAS performance events, although the strength of their individual contributions varied. During the SFAS process, soldiers complete a battery of tests that measure language aptitude, general intelligence, and several other dimensions of cognitive ability, as well as the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The SFAS performance events provided the greatest predictive strength, followed by the cognitive ability and physical fitness tests.[27] This lends support to the notion that there is already a well-functioning selection system in place.

It is important to reduce the potential for psychological injury during the selection and assessment periods. SOF candidates exposed to high-intensity stress showed robust cortisol increases and impaired working memory and visuo-spatial declarative memory.[28] Since candidates' sense of coherence, hardiness, locus of control, and self-efficacy predict successful selection,[29] measuring them in the selection process provides valuable information as to whether they are suitable for SOF (see table 17.3).

Selection Process Models

The physical demands of military training and selection courses are high, and it is important that candidates who commence such courses have the physical capabilities necessary to reduce their risk of injury and promote their chances of success.[30] Data collected from Australian army SOF candidates indicate that a high proportion of candidates who commence SOF selection courses are unsuccessful.[31] Insufficient physical capability may be one of the reasons for these low completion rates. Asking potential candidates to undertake a

TABLE 17.3
Important Cognitive Factors for Operating in Dangerous Contexts

General intelligence	Self-confidence
Self-awareness	Stress management skills
Conceptual ability	Adaptability
General aptitude	Internal locus of control
Meaning making	Individual purpose alignment

battery of physical capability assessments, known as the SOF Entry Test in the Australian SOF, screens out those not physically suitable for the job.

Testing for physical resilience and endurance is also important. During the many years of FSK selection, candidates' ability to carry heavy physical loads over extended distances and times was the best indicator of training completion. Danish soldiers who served in Afghanistan experienced a high percentage of knee and back injuries, so assessing future SOF operators on their capacity to march and carry heavy loads for extended distances may be a wise starting point.[32] Training soldiers to cope with the extra load and weight has been shown to be a decisive factor for success in operations in, for instance, Afghanistan.[33] This may also suggest the need for better physical training and perhaps better load-bearing equipment. In the FSK scenario presented at the start of this chapter, the team and the team leader all had heavy rucksacks that they would have to carry a long distance across unforgiving terrain.

How Leaders Can Use Recruiting and Selection to Strengthen Their Organization's Culture

Leadership aims the gun so that the team can pull the trigger.[34] Perhaps nowhere is leadership so important as in SOF, other military units, and first responder organizations, because these leaders play a major role in affecting their teams' morale and character development.[35] It is up to leaders to align the character strengths of their team members with the organization's values.

In uncertain times, truly special leaders must be *transformational*; that is, they must create a shared vision and inspire followers to achieve more than they believed possible. A meta-analysis of leaders found that personality and general mental ability account for only 15 percent of the variance in ratings of the suitability of applicants for high-risk occupations.[36] Clearly, there are other factors at play. One may be the personality attribute of openness, which has been shown to be a strong predictor of transformational leadership performance among military personnel.[37]

EMERGING TRENDS IN ELITE OPERATOR SELECTION

Selecting Future SOF Enlisted Leaders: The U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment's Updated Ranger Assessment and Selection Program

The U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment is widely considered to be among the most elite and capable strike forces in the world. To join the Rangers as an enlisted soldier, one must be a triple volunteer: volunteer to enlist in the Army and attend basic and advanced individual training (required of all Army personnel), volunteer to attend Airborne School, and volunteer to attend the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program (RASP). Advancement to the Ranger Regiment's leadership ranks thus requires successful completion of RASP and successful service as a Ranger in one of the regiment's operational battalions.

Over the years, RASP has operated with a relatively stable three-week curriculum and objective standards (e.g., time requirements for a five-mile run, a twelve-mile road march, and land navigation). Yet from 2015 to 2017, the RASP graduation rate dropped from 62 percent to 27 percent, leaving several parts of the regiment undermanned. Notably, many RASP candidates were simply quitting before they had even been tested on several of the performance events. Though a high-level investigation showed that some improvements were needed in the structure and leadership of the program, neither an abusive cadre nor a less physically fit entry population was found to be the driving issue behind the drop in RASP completion rates.[38]

In 2021, a former battalion commander from the 75th studied the situation and concluded that the Rangers needed to optimize RASP to consider the unique needs of the population—in this case Generation Z (Americans born between 1995 and 2012 who grew up with smartphones).[39] Some researchers believe Generation Z is different from previous generations due to their familiarity with technology, the changing nature of relationships, less respect for parents and authority, and a decline in respect for institutions; while valuing acceptance, belonging, a need to control, and desire for a meaningful existence.[40] Considering these potential generational preferences, another former battalion commander (of an infantry paratrooper battalion) recommended that Army leaders do more developmental counseling, foster team building in shared hardships, and role-model transformational (versus transactional or attritional) leadership.[41]

Knowing that Gen Zers are now the source of RASP candidates, the Rangers instituted several major changes along these lines. Whereas previous RASP candidates had received minimal real-time feedback on their performance during the course, RASP implemented an active feedback model so that candidates now receive regular, encouraging feedback whenever possible, including feedback sessions after each major graded event. The 75th also extended the duration of RASP from three to five weeks, giving more time for each candidate to psychologically transition from their initial identity as a civilian to a conventional soldier to a SOF soldier. The 75th also moved the most challenging week of RASP from the second week to the fifth week, which allowed for a progression of events of increasing challenge, improving the confidence of the candidates along the way. Leveraging the power of strongly positive role models, the Rangers also started to send their best noncommissioned officers to become RASP cadre, although it had been considered a less-than-optimal assignment before.[42]

These structural changes were correlated with success. Even though RASP has become longer and more challenging, the RASP graduation rate has increased to 54 percent, almost identical to the historic norm of 55 percent, although it is not yet conclusively known if the changes were *the* key factors driving that increase. Therefore, other SOF units should consider the possibility that generational differences may be influencing SOF and first-responder recruiting, assessment, selection, and training, since the source for all young adult talent is now Generation Z.

Selecting Senior Military Leaders: The U.S. Army's New Battalion Command Selection Program

Battalion commanders are the first level of elite leaders in the U.S. Army. In 2020, out of the 1,902 operational-branch Army officers who remained on active duty long enough to be eligible to command a battalion, only 22.9 percent made it through the Battalion Commander Assessment Program's (BCAP's) requisite recruitment, assessment, and selection phases to be chosen for that role (or an equivalent role).[43] Most BCAP selectees will supervise about five hundred soldiers and are wholly responsible for the health, welfare, and performance of their soldiers during both training and combat operations. Battalion commanders hold perhaps the Army's most important leadership position, because these leaders have an outsized influence on their organizations and are the source of general officers.[44]

Prior to 2020, the Army selected battalion commanders by convening a board of senior officers to review eligible candidates' annual officer evaluation reports (OERs) and officer record brief (ORB), a record of assignments, military qualifications, and educational qualifications. This makes sense because past performance has been shown to be predictive of future performance in positions of increased responsibility.[45] The board members closely examined key sentences on each OER while considering whether the candidates' senior raters (their boss' supervisor at the time of each rating) considered the candidates' relative potential to be in the top or bottom 50 percent of their peers. In 2020, based on the hypothesis that gathering more relevant information about each candidate will lead to more reliable selection decisions, the Army introduced the Battalion Commander Assessment Program, which retained the legacy OER and ORB review process but added a series of additional relevant assessments.

The Army used its Army Leader Requirements Model's competencies of *leads*, *develops*, and *achieves*, and attributes of *intellect*, *character*, and *presence* as a framework to design assessments that would evaluate the desired knowledge, skills, and behaviors (KSBs) most needed in battalion commanders.[46] Before candidates arrived at the four-day BCAP, the Army collected at least five confidential peer evaluations and five confidential subordinate evaluations, including the very direct question of whether the candidate should or should not be given a battalion command. During the in-person portion of BCAP, candidates undergo a physical fitness assessment, two written communication assessments, a team leadership and followership exercise, a cognitive and a noncognitive assessment, a comprehensive psychological assessment, and a verbal communication assessment given through a double-blind panel interview. The panel interview was specifically designed with several interventions to minimize panel members' biases.

The first purpose of BCAP is to designate candidates "ready for command" or "not yet ready for command." Its second purpose is to rank-order the candidates designated "ready for command." Since the legacy OER-review process remains one component of the overall BCAP assessment, it is possible to compare how the addition of the peer and

subordinate reviews and the four days of additional assessments changed the outcome of who was selected and who was not. The January 2020 BCAP found 13 percent of candidates to be not yet ready for command (disqualified for the year) and modified the order of merit list for the remaining 87 percent found to be ready for command. In the end, out of the 450 battalion commanders selected by the January 2020 BCAP, a full one-third were different from those who would have been selected by the legacy OER-review system alone.[47]

Since BCAP identifies officers to assume battalion command over a year later, the Army must wait two to three years before it will be able to observe and test sitting battalion commanders to assess whether BCAP selected better battalion commanders than the legacy system would have if left alone. But the Army can conclusively show that the candidates selected by BCAP were more fit, more conceptually capable, better written communicators, better oral communicators, and less toxic than those who would have been selected by the legacy file-review process alone. The Army is rapidly applying similar models to select its future brigade commanders, acquisitions corps leaders, battalion sergeants major, medical corps leaders, and senior chaplains.

Though BCAP's many innovations offer lessons for other elite organizations' leader selection processes, BCAP comes with challenges that should be considered before replication in other contexts. The first is the significant travel and opportunity costs of the 140-person cadre, not including the dozens of general officers who serve as panel members. The BCAP's second cost is perhaps its most significant; only 56 percent of the officers eligible to compete for battalion command volunteered to attend BCAP,[48] which is fewer than the percentage of volunteers in previous years. Even though BCAP disqualified several leaders with counterproductive (e.g., toxic or disengaged) behaviors and more accurately assessed the remaining candidates determined to be ready for command, it may or may not have selected the most qualified lieutenant colonels in the Army. It would be more accurate to say that BCAP selected the best of the officers who volunteered to come to BCAP and compete for command, because many of the best officers may have been among those who did not volunteer to compete to become a battalion commander. The U.S. Army is aware of and looking into this phenomenon.

Implications for Nonmilitary Organizations

The parallels between most military SOF and civilian first responders are many. Both have comprehensive physical, mental, and character requirements. Both have rigorous assessment, selection, and training programs for candidates to qualify as operators. Their operators are likely to be engaged in *in extremis* situations in their day-to-day professional work. Additionally, since both first responder and SOF units are *in extremis* organizations characterized by their members' *competence, inherent motivation, learning orientation, shared risk, and element of a common lifestyle*,[49] many of the insights about SOF in this SOF-focused chapter may be applicable to civilian first responder and similar organizations.

CONCLUSION

Members in military SOF, battalion commanders, and first responders have a lot in common. Among other things, they operate in dangerous and unknown situations, cope with uncertainty, and need to make quick and correct decisions. Successful members of these organizations typically have above-average intelligence and the willpower to continue the extra mile.

Considering the extensive physical, mental, and character qualifications required to apply to join many *in extremis* organizations, the percentage of the general population who meet the minimum qualifications may already be low. Therefore, a deliberate and formal recruitment and retention system is required to adequately man *in extremis* units.

Once the recruitment phase has been successful, *in extremis* organizations should lean on experienced operators to coach and mentor the candidates through the selection process. As a final assessment and selection event, putting the candidates through a performance review and a deliberate, semi-structured interview with a blind panel can reveal much relevant information about a potential candidate while minimizing potential biases of the panel members.

The traits that predict successful *in extremis* operators and leaders include intelligence, commitment, character, and a high level of stress tolerance. Successful candidates will also reveal a strong ability and desire to learn. Assessing for stress tolerance is important to see whether a candidate can withstand both physical and mental stress. Testing people under physical stress reveals their core personality and willpower, as well as how they manage to cooperate with others in stressful situations. A candidate's ability to bounce back and to accept the situation also should be tested. Peer evaluations are critical and can function as a method of gathering honest feedback for potential candidates. Looking for candidates who are truthful and have integrity should also be important in the assessment process.

Finding and developing individuals able to succeed with these units will require time. They cannot be mass-produced; their quality is more important than their quantity, and individuals are more important than hardware. The Norwegian FSK, U.S. Army Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, U.S. Army Battalion Commander Assessment Program, and many first responder organizations have several characteristics in common: a focus on operator/leader comfort with ambiguity, physical and mental stamina, and flexibility; and candidates who function well as both individuals and teammates. Strong candidates also display cooperation, trust, and integrity.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Elite organizations use multiple and varied assessments to recruit, assess, and select members prior to accepting them for training.
2. Assessment for elite organizations is a multidimensional and longitudinal process. While more relevant assessments lead to better selection decisions, no one task/test alone is typically adequate for a selection or rejection decision.

3. Gathering confidential peer and subordinate feedback from the candidates' peers and subordinates is critical to seeing the entire candidate.
4. Elite units should prioritize their recruitment and retention programs or risk being undermanned.
5. Providing individual, regular, encouraging feedback sessions may help with retention and success of Generation Z candidates in elite unit assessment and training programs.
6. Psychologists can be key advisers in the assessment and selection process, though commanders should retain the sole decision-making authority.

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CHAPTER 18

Leader Development for Dangerous Contexts

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THE CRITICAL IMPACT OF LEADERS IN ORGANIZATIONS points to the importance of effective and honorable leadership. Leaders influence the behavior, cognition, affect/emotions, well-being, and performance of individuals, teams, and organizations.[1] Even more, effective leaders shape organizational culture and increase satisfaction with and commitment to the work, the leader, and the team.[2] Most important, the leader capacities that produce these outcomes are developable.[3]

The consequences of failed and destructive leadership are equally compelling. Leadership failures, typically associated with failure to increase the bottom line or to achieve overall organizational performance, often manifest in a disengaged and dissatisfied workforce, poor processes and systems, unethical cultures, and other undesirable outcomes.[4] While such consequences also occur in dangerous-context organizations, leadership failure in dangerous contexts—resulting in harm or catastrophic loss of life, liberty, or property—is simply too high a cost to accept without intentional efforts to mitigate it.

Once the importance of leadership is understood, the logical next steps for organizations include recruiting and developing effective leaders. Aside from politically appointed positions, however, most dangerous-context organizations operate within closed recruitment systems, largely promoting from within their ranks. Therefore, accelerating the *development* of leaders at all levels is vital. In addition, leadership develops through a continuous process requiring years of effort for mastery of the knowledge, skills, attributes, and abilities that contribute to effective leadership.[5] However, despite the fact that organizational expenditures on development are increasing, and despite widespread recognition of the importance of leader development and evidence that training and development interventions are generally effective in improving leadership and its outcomes, scholars and practitioners alike have been skeptical of leader development.[6] Organizations often

struggle to balance their priorities, and even when they recognize the importance of leader development, they often do not implement the development programs right for them.[7]

The importance of leader development for organizations operating at the "tip of the spear" in dangerous contexts is surely evident to readers of this chapter, though understanding its importance does not make us invulnerable to getting development wrong. The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the "how to" of leader development and to present an in-depth process for it, a process that includes elements proven important for effective leader development programs. To provide our "how to" focus, we start with a case study of leader development from Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) that demonstrates elements and implementation of an effective leader development program. Drawing from the case study and other examples, we then lay out the essentials of the development process. We close with a review of key points from the chapter and a checklist for building and implementing an effective development program.

CASE STUDY: LEADER DEVELOPMENT IN FBI SWAT

Background: The Need for Development

After their inception in 1973, FBI SWAT teams grew in capability as their tactics, technology, and operational experience evolved and improved. Each FBI SWAT team is under the direct command of the head of the local FBI field office, but all receive their training from the FBI's Tactical Section. Significantly increased deployment of FBI SWAT teams over the last ten years, coupled with large missions requiring numerous teams to come together under one tactical command, led to the realization that although FBI SWAT teams were staffed with technically knowledgeable and skilled personnel, they lacked consistency across teams in how they planned missions and employed tactics. This added risk to already complex missions and highlighted an organizational need for standardization of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes (KSAAs) across the FBI SWAT teams.

The FBI's Tactical Section studied the problem and recognized that the most significant area of divergence was with the senior team leaders of the FBI SWAT teams. The FBI had long provided initial SWAT training, as well as follow-on skills training (e.g., rappelling and specialized weapons training), but had not provided formal in-service training in leader KSAAs such as mission analysis and planning, how to conduct a block of training, sustained operations, or how to brief operations orders to senior leaders. In an environment where the FBI regularly assembles multiple SWAT teams—sometimes involving hundreds of personnel—in furtherance of a safely executed mission, the FBI needed to professionalize and codify the development of its tactical leaders.

Establishing an Exemplar

A team of senior tacticians built an exemplar of the capabilities an experienced tactical operator should exhibit to best accomplish the FBI's mission and then established a leadership exemplar that would best position the senior team leaders of each FBI SWAT team for

success. This was done with an eye to the unique mission of the FBI—to be contextually specific—and highlighted not only skills and abilities in developing and leading a tactical team but also proficiency in working with partner agencies' tactical teams and integrating with other FBI SWAT teams and the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team.

Building a KSAA Map and Creating a Development Plan

From these exemplars, the Tactical Section developed a series of training courses designed and sequenced to build on one another. Whereas the FBI had for many years only mandated completion of "SWAT Basic" to be an active member of an FBI SWAT team, the Tactical Section looked at the KSAAs that SWAT operators and those who lead them should have. This review led to the development of KSAA maps that guided the development of a three-phase training curriculum designed to be completed over the course of an agent's career, with the third phase designed to both train and certify the senior leaders of each FBI SWAT team.

Fundamental tactics and weapon skills were taught in the level-one course. Three separate level-two courses in firearms, close quarter battle (CQB), and combatives (focused on physically taking a combative but unarmed subject into custody while wearing tactical gear and weapons) were designed for those ready for the curriculum. These courses, which focused on more senior SWAT operators, included training techniques and the application of tactical theory with an understanding of applicable law and policy in deciding what applications were most likely to be effective and how they fit into the FBI's use-of-force policy.

The level-three course was developed as a senior team leader certification course and included mission planning, contingency development, multiteam integration, senior leader briefing, and field exercises conducted collaboratively with personnel from across the FBI. While topics such as mission planning and contingency development (see chapter 20) certainly require a training component, this course was designed to move rapidly into an educational space where highly trained participants theorized as to the best application of various tactics and planned for contingencies (see chapter 21). These hypothetical exercises created an experiential opportunity for the participants to carry their plans from development through briefing to execution. The course culminated in a full field exercise, starting with the briefing of plans to actual FBI executives and concluding with the execution of those plans in concert with participants in the FBI's Tactical Operations Center course. This created a safe but effective environment from which participants could learn from their mistakes, learn from each other, and be exposed to peers from around the organization.

Plan Implementation, Facing Resistance, and Evidence of Effectiveness

Most of those who participated were enthusiastic about the training provided in the level-one and level-two courses. Agents assigned to FBI SWAT teams routinely jump at the chance for further training in weapons skills, CQB, and combatives. However, the idea that senior team leaders would return to the training grounds at Quantico to ensure they

were using the same tactics, were interoperable, and could conduct blended team missions met with resistance. Prior to this time, agents on SWAT teams were simply picked to be the leaders of those teams by the head of each field office. This had to change if the FBI were to achieve highly interoperable teams capable of converging in a short time in any location in the United States to conduct high-risk operations. Some sitting senior team leaders viewed the level-three certification as a threat to their position rather than a furtherance of their training. In essence, these team leaders showed a lack of developmental readiness because they were not motivated to participate in the developmental experience.

Having seen tremendous success through the level-two courses, the Tactical Section was able to provide data supporting significant accomplishments during multiteam missions that showed the benefits of a training plan focused on interoperability. This allowed for the implementation of the level-three senior team leader certification—but not without friction along the way. At the outset of the level-three course, the chief of the FBI's Tactical Section received numerous calls from senior team leaders, heads of field offices, and their deputies questioning the necessity of such a certification program and the validity of the design behind it. As more senior team leaders went through the course, returned to their offices, and conducted missions, however, the calls started to change. Heads of field offices called to say that their SWAT team was more capable than the SWAT teams they had served on earlier in their careers. Later calls applauded teams as not only more proficient but also consistent; the heads knew exactly what they would be getting when they called for help from surrounding teams. Ultimately, and maybe as the best compliment to the program, heads of field offices asked for the Tactical Section to collaborate on the selection of new senior team leaders, indicating both individual and organizational developmental readiness.

Plan Effectiveness

Today, there is clear evidence that the professionalization of a cradle-to-grave training process with a focus on credentialing those in leadership positions increased both the efficacy of operations and their safety. The FBI is seeing a higher percentage of subjects arrested during large tactical operations, which reduces the number of those who become dangerous fugitives. Additionally, FBI SWAT teams have displayed significant interoperability, leading to more nimble and capable mission forces available to senior FBI leaders during these operations. This has also led to better interoperability with the planning and logistics cells at the Tactical Section as well as during missions conducted jointly with, or in support of, the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team.

DEFINING LEADERSHIP AND LEADER DEVELOPMENT

With our FBI SWAT case study in mind, we now move forward, taking this example and integrating it with an overview of leadership and guidance on effective leader development. In general, leadership is a process of influencing an organized group to achieve its goals, where influence occurs through the demonstration and the promotion of right behavior.

There are practical and ethical aspects of leadership—practical in the influence of a group toward goal achievement, and ethical in the moral obligations that come with being in a position of leadership and the need to properly serve the organization's stakeholders. As our FBI SWAT case exemplifies, leadership is contextual. It is an influence process that draws from a highly developed organizational context to foster positive interactions within and across individuals and groups and within a dynamic external environment.[8]

Leader development is also contextually specific. The qualities a leader needs to develop are not simply based on individual strengths and weaknesses. Rather, leaders operate within organizations that have a specific composition, mission, structure, and culture. Even more, the introduction of organizational initiatives may require new associated leadership capacities beyond what the organization has needed in the past. Therefore, efforts to build leader development programs must occur with composition, mission, structure, culture, and organizational initiatives in mind. For example, the set of capacities and capabilities a fire captain needs differ from those the leader of a crime lab needs. To that end, leader development is a process of identifying and then building the specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and abilities (KSAAs) needed to make leaders effective in achieving the outcomes essential for mission success and in avoiding the pitfalls that derail leadership in their specific organization. Therefore, we define leader development for dangerous contexts as *a process that builds individual and collective capacities and the organizational processes, systems, and culture needed to lead adaptive performance across phases of a unit's preparation for, function during, and post hoc recovery from dangerous contexts.*

This definition accentuates the varying demands of leadership across phases of operating in dangerous events (i.e., preparation, during, and recovery), requiring different developed capacities for each phase. Objectives of development for dangerous contexts must include provision of social, psychological, and organizational resources for all three phases, to include managing coping under stress and enabling successful adaptation to extreme and volatile conditions that then foster mitigation of harm, successful post hoc restorative processes (e.g., emotional healing), and the development and maintenance of organizational processes and systems that support performance (see chapters 5, 7, 8, and 9).

Before we move forward, a quick caveat. A common debate in leadership literature regards whether leadership and management are different. While the roles are distinctive, they overlap without a clear separation, and treating them as separate positions perpetuates a false dichotomy.[9] Still, there is a tendency to view technical proficiency as more *manager*-like than *leader*-like. With the three authors having experience as military leaders, we know it would be difficult to lead effectively without being proficient in our military occupational specialty (e.g., infantry, engineer, armor)—our technical proficiency. Management and leadership are interlinked. Managing a structural fire as a fire battalion chief, for example, requires credibility as a leader, articulating to the unit a clear leader intent and compelling vision for attacking the fire, and motivating firefighters to give their best to execute the plan (see chapter 14). Technical proficiency is thus part of a highly

developed organizational context; it represents part of the attributes that followers associate with competence and credibility, perceptions that feed into judgments of trust.[10] Thus, one cannot separate technical competency from leader development, because it is part of the context of effective leadership. In this chapter, however, we concentrate foremost on ways to develop *leader*-like capabilities to enhance a leader's capacity to lead.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT: PROCESS, CHARACTERISTICS, DRIVERS, AND MECHANISMS OF DEVELOPMENT

The Development Process

Leader development is a process that should include five steps:

1. *Establish an exemplar* of leader KSAAs identified as important for the organization.
2. For each leader, *conduct a gap analysis* against the exemplar to determine areas of needed development.
3. *Create a development plan* (including needed education, training, and experience) to address what each leader needs to close the gap.
4. *Implement the development plan*.
5. *Monitor plan effectiveness*.

In our experience observing leader development programs in numerous organizations, execution of these steps varies widely, not only as a matter of whether all steps are included—the establishment of a clear exemplar, gap analysis, and monitoring for effectiveness are often absent—but also in development of a mature plan that has an appropriate level of focus, is contextually specific, and includes the support needed from others (e.g., coaching, time for training, and feedback). However, beyond planning and support for development, leader developers often face practical questions such as what features characterize effective development programs, who drives leader development, and how development is actually delivered. There is a lot to unpack with the *who*, *how*, and *what* questions of leader development; to help keep track of each, we include a leader development program checklist at the end of the chapter (see figure 18.3). For now, we start by addressing these practical questions.

Characteristics of Effective Leader Development Programs

There are six elements necessary for effective development programs: (1) program maturity, (2) level of focus, (3) time horizon, (4) assessment of development progress, (5) contextual specificity, and (6) social support.[11] Program maturity includes having a structured, standardized, and disciplined approach to development and the use of content that is validated and well tested, proven as effective in developing the leadership KSAAs you intend to build. Level of focus relates to matching development with the levels of planning and operational environment of leaders—in what dangerous-context organizations often label as tactical,

operational, and strategic levels—ensuring that development content is appropriately tailored and relevant to the target audience and their level of leadership experience. Time horizon concerns the development timeline—where development is not a "one-and-done" seminar but a long-term, multifaceted plan with multiple iterations of education, training, and experience. The gap analysis, also called a needs assessment,[12] involves the identification of developmental needs by comparing a given leader's qualities against the needs of the organization. Assessment of development progress includes measurement of learning and the extent to which leaders transfer learned KSAAs to actual behaviors in the workplace. Contextual specificity relates to development being situated within the context relevant to the leader—including mission, team composition, organizational structure, organizational initiatives, and organizational culture requiring KSAAs that differ across organizations or across subunits of the same organization. Finally, support from others, or social support, includes various supportive interactions, information, and resources intended to facilitate leader development. It may be instrumental support (e.g., providing time to participate in formal development, dedicating resources to development, and creating incentives connected to leadership development) or emotional support (e.g., acknowledgment of the challenges of development by providing support such as encouragement, feedback, and sense giving). These elements help address questions about what makes up effective programs, with the presence of each combining into a strong foundation for leader development (see figure 18.1). Next, we focus on the who.

Drivers of Development

Leader development typically occurs through one or a combination of two entities that we refer to as the drivers of development. There is self-directed leader development, and there is organization-directed leader development.[13] The two drivers can, of course, be effectively integrated, and developing leaders can take on and tailor parts of the development process to fit their needs. While each driver has its strengths, neither is a sure bet for delivering the seven elements necessary for effective development programs.

Self-directed development. Personal desire, or felt responsibility to be a better leader, drives the self-directed approach to development. While effective in that it benefits from intrinsic motivation, there are common shortcomings and substantial variability in the effectiveness of this approach—largely as a function of individual characteristics.[14] Also, if we understand leadership as something that happens in a specific organizational context, then the specifics of development should vary. To the extent individuals understand their own strengths and weaknesses, they are poised to target key areas of personal development. Yet, many leaders lack the combination of self-awareness and knowledge of relevant leadership KSAAs to effectively self-assess and then build a comprehensive, contextually relevant development plan to address the gaps without the validation and help of the organization. Further, the self-directed approach generally lacks social support—particularly feedback that helps point a leader in the right direction or guide the person through the development process. Overall,

the self-directed approach often lacks an external component that supplements what an individual may be pursuing in their personal endeavor to improve as a leader. Even more, one's personal desire for improvement may or may not be connected to the appropriate level or organizational context in which the organization wants that person to lead. Thus, beyond self-directed development, an organization-directed driver can supplement it.

Organization-directed development. In this chapter we reference "context" quite often, though somewhat generically. Some specificity on context will help the reader to appreciate the strengths of organization-directed leader development. First, and most commonly, we refer to context in the sense of *operational* context—as in the composition, mission, organizational structure, and culture of a team or organization. The FBI SWAT case study presents some insight into these various contextual features. The operational context conveys the needs and demands placed on organizational leaders—the context they must be able to effectively lead within. However, there is also the *developmental* context that can be shaped to promote leader development (e.g., creating a learning organization where there is adequate "freedom to fail" and in which members provide each other with transparent developmental feedback). These two contexts—operational and developmental—are not mutually exclusive, but they are distinct. The developmental context strengthens development processes. An understanding of the organization's operational context should inform the establishment of what "model" of leader—the leader exemplar—will guide developmental planning, whereas the developmental context shapes implementation of developmental plans and reviews of progress. Indeed, establishing a developmental context is one of the areas often neglected in developmental planning.

Like the self-directed approach, the organization-directed approach varies in effectiveness and delivery—from internal, ad hoc development efforts to more formal schoolhouse-type settings. Overall, organization-directed efforts tend to benefit from greater program maturity, appropriate level of focus (e.g., tactical, operational, and strategic), greater contextual specificity, and higher likelihood of social support than self-directed development. Yet, despite possible strengths of one driver over another, the use of self- and organization-directed development is not an "either-or" proposition. Both approaches have strengths and are complementary, and both should be pursued. We depict both drivers at the base of figure 18.1 as underlying the foundation of leader development in that individuals *and* organizations share the burden of driving the leader development process.

However, combining program drivers and elements does not account for all aspects of effective development programs. We have not yet addressed the *how* of development. Indeed, one of the most consequential factors in developing leaders—experience—is typically left out of both individual- and organization-driven approaches. To the extent individuals and organizations pursue development, the tendency is to develop an "educational" or "training" plan for development, when guided experience in varying leadership roles is also a key mechanism of development.[15] In all, education, training, *and* experience represent the *how* of delivering leader development.

Mechanisms of Development

There is no magic bullet for leader development, but the mechanisms that contribute to development are clear—with significant differences among leaders explained by experience, education, training, and the influence of other people (such as a very good—or very bad—supervisor as a role model).[16] Therefore, in discussing development, we emphasize that leader development programs should involve more than attendance at a seminar or some ad hoc targeting of KSAAs. Rather, development includes an integrated program of education, training, and, most important, experience in leading others. Self- and organization-directed development plans often fail to include all three mechanisms—or fail to integrate them such that they are all connected and mutually reinforcing. Although the inclination may be to read this chapter for insights in developing an educational program or leader development seminar, we are proposing a holistic, contextually specific approach that includes developmental mechanisms of education, training, and experience.

Closing Thoughts on Program Development Structure

So far, we have established the primary components of development. First, there is the five-step process: establish an exemplar, conduct a gap analysis, create a development plan to close the gap, implement the plan, and monitor plan effectiveness. Next, there are

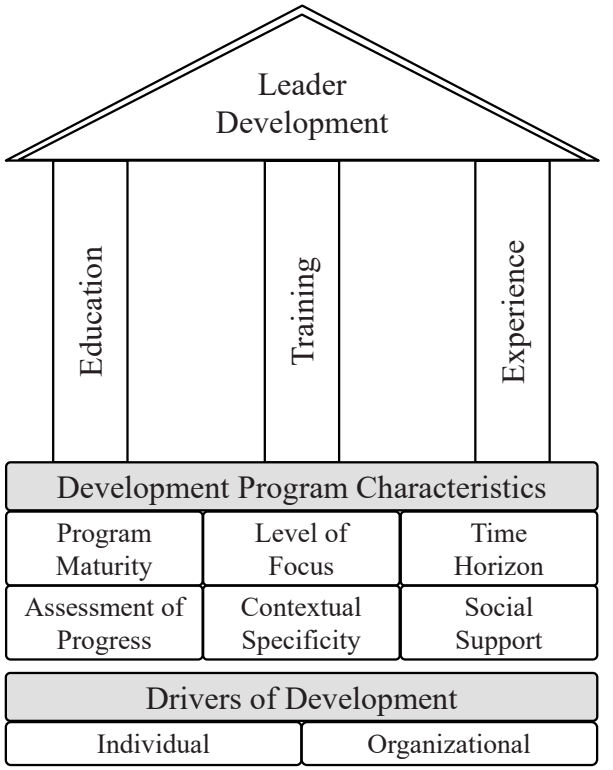

FIGURE 18.1. Leader Development Program Structure

Adapted from Figure1-1 in U.S. Department of the Army, Army Leader Development Program, DA PAM 350-58 (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 8 March 2013): 2.

Step 1 Establish a Leader Exemplar	**Step 2** Conduct a Gap Analysis	**Step 3** Create a Development Plan	**Step 4** Implement the Development Plan	**Step 5** Monitor Plan Effectiveness
Build the Map: Knowledge Skills Attributes Abilities	Three Gaps: Self Individual Organizational	Characteristics: Challenging Social Support Mechanisms: Education Training Experience	Requirements: Communication Accountability Focus	Indicators: Receptivity Learning Application … and more

FIGURE 18.2. Five-Step Development Process

important development program characteristics: program maturity, level of focus, time horizon, assessment of development progress, contextual specificity, and social support.[17] Next, there are the drivers of development: self- and organization-directed development. Finally, there are the mechanisms of development: education, training, and experience. These various components form the underlying foundation and structure of leader development (see figure 18.1). In the next section, we detail the five development process steps, with some attention given in each step to the drivers and mechanisms of development.

THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: FIVE STEPS

Leader development often seems clumsy and incomplete. Certainly, common shortcomings exist—as we noted above. Still, some of that sense of clumsiness stems from the reality of organizational life as dynamic and uncertain. While our purpose is to present a robust, structured process of development organized around five steps, those five steps can be fluid, as they were in the FBI SWAT case study that began this chapter. Even so, we present leader development as a methodological process involving five steps, with important features of these steps highlighted in figure 18.2 and explicated in the following sections as we discuss each step in detail.

Step 1. Establish a Leader Exemplar to Guide Development

As Yogi Berra said, "If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up someplace else." Yet organizations often fail to create a clear model outlining what constitutes an exemplary leader for their organization and its operating context. Without such a guide, there is no clear endpoint toward which to design and direct leader development efforts. Establishing an exemplar model is thus a necessary first step in designing a leader development program, which then serves as a "target" for self- and/or organization-directed leader development, thus focusing and aligning leader development efforts throughout the organization.

While there are some general leader capacities or capabilities that might be included in any organization's leader exemplar model (e.g., self-awareness or ability to inspire), each

organization should build a leader exemplar model that is tailored to its own needs in terms of its unique mission, its composition and structure, its culture, and its operational context, to include the specific forms of danger it faces and under what conditions. Our FBI SWAT case provides an example where the unique mission, structure, culture, and operational context shaped the development process. Indeed, the uniqueness of organizations illuminates how a general label of "dangerous context" is too broad to be meaningfully applied across all dangerous-context organizations. For example, firefighter leaders and their teams face the risk of death or injury, but unlike military leaders they do not direct and purposely orchestrate the death or injury of others, which imposes unique leadership demands. As another example, police and fire leaders often interface with local elected or appointed officials who control their budgets and have policy authority. Such interactions demand certain leadership capabilities that most military leaders do not need, because they do not interface with outside officials on such matters. The unique leadership demands of different types of organizations operating in dangerous contexts have been addressed elsewhere,[18] and so we only reinforce the need for organizations to create a tailored leader exemplar model tied to the unique demands their leaders face.

The discussion thus far has focused on the organization as the party designing leader exemplar models. Yet, all is not lost for an emerging leader if the organization does not have such clear frameworks. Individuals can form their own exemplars through observing and seeking mentoring from model leaders in the organization. In the language of leader development and self-awareness, such an envisioned exemplar has been called the *ideal self*—a blueprint, or mental model, of what a leader desires and seeks to become.[19] Distinct from the *current self*, an ideal self becomes a powerful force to motivate development to close the gap between the current self and the ideal self.[20] In practice, few organizations have the time and resources to maximize all their leaders' development, so effective leader development is often a combination of organization-directed and self-directed development.

Knowledge, Skills, Attributes, and Abilities

Though we have somewhat loosely referred to leader capacities and capabilities, the more refined approach to developing an exemplar model involves breaking up the model into specific knowledge, skills, attributes, and abilities needed by an organization's leaders for its operating context.

Leader knowledge. Knowledge is the theoretical or practical understanding of a subject, concept, or theory. Leader knowledge, then, is a body of knowledge distinctive to the domain of leadership, and which if applied effectively makes performance as a leader possible. To develop, for example, there must be understanding of what, conceptually, leadership is and entails, knowledge of motivation theory, and knowledge of different leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership theory or servant leadership theory) that can be used in different situations and contexts (see chapter 13 for a discussion of

different leadership styles). Educational settings are ideal venues for gaining such knowledge. Simply studying and learning such concepts and theories, however, does not give the leader the skills and ability to employ them.

Leader skills. Skills are the learned proficiencies to perform certain physical, verbal, or mental tasks. Skills are observable, quantifiable, and measurable through testing. Skills are also often referred to as "expertise" gained from training, practice, and so on. Leader skills are often categorized as either technical skills or social skills. Technical skills may include strategy formulation skills, performance management skills, organizational design skills, or functional skills (e.g., incident response command for a firefighter leader, or designing an ambush for an infantry leader). Social skills may include public speaking skills, visioning skills, strategic thinking skills, negotiation skills, team-building skills, or interpersonal skills.

Leader attributes. Attributes are the less tangible characteristics of leaders that constitute their personality, disposition, values, beliefs, character, orientations, philosophies, and mindset. The U.S. Army once used a developmental framework labeled "Be-Know-Do."[21] Attributes are the "Be," who the leader is as a person; "Know" entails the knowledge and skills components of the KSAA model; and "Do" is the leader's abilities. Any complete exemplar model to guide leader development should describe the specific attributes leaders need to possess to be effective in, and be seen as a credible leader in, the specific organizational context. Those may include attributes such as integrity, courage, honor, discipline, and a diversity mindset.

Leader abilities. Finally, an ability is the capability to actually achieve a desired thing, outcome, or effect as a leader. It is the capacity to perform a specific physical, verbal, or mental activity at a specific time in a specific situation or context to achieve goals or effects as a leader. Some examples include motivating a group, aligning the effort of others, negotiating an effective solution, or instilling a sense of purpose in an organization. To achieve such effects requires the orchestration and application of the leader's knowledge, skills, and attributes in a given situation. Thus, abilities are dependent on and are a manifestation of the other three components of the KSAA model.

For example, consider a leader's ability to be an effective coach or mentor to his/her followers. That leader would be most capable of coaching effectively if he/she has:

- *Knowledge* of human development theory, counseling theory, and knowledge of the follower and their strengths, weaknesses, and aspirations
- *Skills* related to effective communications, interpersonal relations, emotional intelligence, and counseling methods (e.g., asking questions in ways that evoke new insights in the follower, and methods to guide the follower's goal setting), and
- *Attributes* that the follower sees as being desirable, such that they see the leader as credible and as a role model they want to emulate, and come to trust and respect the leader such that they open themselves up to the advice and recommendations the leader communicates during the coaching sessions.

A highly capable leadership coach thus has the knowledge, skills, and attributes noted above as well as the *ability* to orchestrate and employ them all in an actual coaching session. As another example, consider a leader's *ability* to convey a powerful vision. To do so that leader would need:

- *Knowledge* of language, linguistics, and storytelling; knowledge of the audience; and technical knowledge about the matter on which they are speaking so that their words have credibility with listeners
- *Skills* in public speaking, oration, and nonverbal communication, and
- *Attributes* that the audience sees as charismatic, credible, trustworthy, and inspiring.

These two examples should make clear that each part of the KSAA framework is necessary but not sufficient in itself—all must be developed and employed together to provide effective leadership capability.

We noted above that each organization (or individual leader forming a model for self-development) operating in dangerous contexts should determine the optimum set of specific KSAAs (i.e., a KSAA "map") needed for their particular organization. We present a sample of KSAAs in table 18.1 to provide illustrative examples of each category.

Developing a KSAA Map

Developing an effective KSAA map should be a multistep process. We detail the process drawing examples from our FBI SWAT case study:

1. Conduct an analysis to determine the specific demands and requirements placed upon the organization's leaders, and the context(s) within which they face those demands. In the case of FBI SWAT, increased deployment of teams on large missions placing numerous teams under one tactical command created a new context with increased demands on leaders.
2. Create a list of abilities the organization's leaders need to possess to operate effectively to meet those requirements in those contexts. For FBI SWAT, the emerging demands required an ability for multiteam integration.
3. Determine the specific underlying knowledge, skills, and attributes the organization's leaders need to develop to enable those abilities. FBI SWAT enabled multiteam integration through the development of knowledge of mission planning, tactical theory, law, and policy.

Prioritization. No organization has the time or resources to develop every possible desirable KSAA in their leaders, and would lose focus if it attempted to do so. Thus, the development of a KSAA map entails ensuring that the highest priority KSAAs are included and that the list is manageable and focuses the organization's limited development resources. Organizations might also determine which KSAAs they will seek to develop

TABLE 18.1
Leader KSAAs Relevant for Dangerous-Context Organizations

Leader Knowledge	*Leader Abilities*
Conceptualization of leadership Leadership styles and theories (ch. 13) Strategy formulation and implementation theory Organizational design and organizational systems theory Understanding of the operating context (chs. 20 & 21) Understanding of enemy/adversaries (chs. 20 & 21) Human development theory Administrative practices and procedures Technical/functional	Sense making (ch. 9) Sense giving (ch. 9) Visioning Operational and tactical planning (chs. 14 & 20) Critical thinking (chs. 6 & 21) Identifying and leveraging talents and strengths (ch. 17) Storytelling Coaching and mentoring Team building (ch. 11) Giving direction (chs. 14 & 15) Monitoring task execution (ch. 15) Guiding alignment (chs. 14 & 15) Building culture (ch. 16)
Leader Skills	***Leader Attributes***
Problem solving (ch. 6) Conflict management Leader development planning Communication and public speaking (ch. 14) Negotiations Decision making (ch. 6) Interpersonal/relationship building (chs. 10, 11, & 15) Motivating others through (ch. 13): –Goal-setting –Performance management –Influence tactics Stress management and emotion regulation (chs. 5 & 7) Self-discipline Political savviness	Ethical (chs. 2 & 3) Emotional intelligence Empathy Self-awareness (ch. 2) Authenticity Adaptability (ch. 14) Courage (ch. 4) Decisiveness and assertiveness (ch. 14) Trustworthiness (chs. 10 & 15) Resilience (chs. 7 & 16) Confidence balanced with humility Wellness and fitness (physical and psychological) Growth and diversity mindsets

Note: Parenthetical references are to chapters in this book covering the noted KSAA in more detail.

through organizational development, which they will prompt their leaders to pursue in self-development, and which they will instead seek to select in their hiring and promotion processes.

Exemplars for differing levels of leadership. Our discussion thus far has addressed the leader KSAA map as a single product. Yet, organizations may be best served by creating multiple KSAA maps, one for each level of leadership. Specifically, leaders operating at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of the organization likely face different challenges and opportunities and thus require different abilities. For example, while political savviness

and strategic thinking may be desirable in tactical-level leaders, these qualities increase in importance as a leader enters the operational level, and are likely necessary to lead effectively at the strategic level. We thus recommend that organizations consider creating a separate KSAA map for leaders at each stratum of their organizational leadership structure.

Each higher-level model assumes that the leader has already mastered the KSAAs included in the lower-level map(s), which should be verified before they attempt to develop the higher KSAAs. Indeed, the lower-level KSAAs are still required when leading at higher levels. A fire captain, for example, needs small-unit leadership skills to lead a small ladder or truck team, but the fire chief still needs those same small-unit leadership skills to lead their immediate staff team.

Exemplars for different career fields. Just as organizations tailor KSAA maps to different levels of the organization, they might also consider whether they need different maps for the different career fields in the organization. This might entail having a common core KSAA map for all leaders in the organization, with additions made for certain career fields based on their operating context or job demands or requirements. For example, while a police department may want all leaders to have some common KSAAs, it may add unique KSAAs for leaders in the SWAT team, forensics, investigative division, and administrative staff, based on the unique demands within each of those domains.

Step 2. Conduct a Gap Analysis: Leader versus Exemplar

In creating a KSAA map(s), the organization essentially establishes what it sees as an exemplary leader. That exemplar model thus serves as the goal the organization's leader development efforts seek to achieve. The next logical step is for the organization to put in place methods to compare individual leaders with that exemplar, conduct a gap analysis to determine what deficiencies each leader has relative to the exemplar, and then design development programs and experiences needed to close that gap. There are three types of gap analysis that can be performed:[22]

- *Self*: Comparison of oneself to the exemplar.
- *Individual:* Conduct a gap analysis for each leader against the KSAA map.
- *Organizational:* Compare average/typical leaders against the exemplar.

Individuals can conduct self-assessment comparing the current self and ideal self as described above, and then design and manage their own leader development plan. Similarly, through conducting individual gap analyses, organizations can create a tailored leader development program for each leader, as outlined in the next section. Finally, organizational gap analysis allows organizations' senior leaders and human resource departments to determine where their leaders tend to have deficiencies relative to the exemplar *on average*, which can guide programmatic and resource allocation decisions concerning organization-wide training and development needs.

Assessment

Conducting a gap analysis requires assessing the organization's leaders against its specific KSAA map. Assessment can be conducted through multiple methods. Common methods include survey assessments, whether via self-assessments, assessments by senior leaders, or by 360-degree assessment (with ratings from self, peers, followers, and senior leaders all rating the relevant KSAAs). Leaders can also attend assessment centers where they perform certain leadership tasks in a simulated setting against set standards and receive developmental feedback on their level of performance relative to the standard. Gaps can also be identified by coaches or mentors who are able to observe the leader in action. Finally, gaps can be indirectly identified through objective performance measures on the job, followed by investigation of the causes of low performance. If a leader's team has excessive turnover, absenteeism, or low performance, for example, a series of interviews might determine which leader KSAA gaps are causing those undesirable outcomes. Whatever processes are used, their use should be standardized across organizational leaders. This allows for averages to be calculated across the organization's leaders to support the organizational gap analysis.

We lack space here to cover all methods and processes of leader assessment and refer readers to other coverage of those topics.[23] What we most want to reinforce is the need for organizations to have robust and preferably multiple methods that can be triangulated to rate leaders against the specific KSAA map to identify gaps. Organizations need to be cautious of using commercial off-the-shelf assessments; they must actually measure the organization's exemplar leader KSAAs rather than rely on some generic framework determined by the consultant who created the measure.

Identifying development gaps allows for the formation of developmental goals and creation of customized leader development plans. We turn to leader development planning next.

Step 3. Create a Development Plan to Close the Gap

At the beginning of this chapter we discussed the broad characteristics of effective development programs, characteristics that either became specific steps in the five-step process or apply to multiple steps—particularly in shaping development of exemplars and their associated KSAA map and now shaping the development plan. In this section we present a holistic development approach that includes developmental mechanisms of education, training, and experience. Before diving into Step 3, however, a note regarding career planning and the importance of an integrative approach to leader development.

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With the gap analysis complete, the leader and organization know the KSAAs their leaders possess and those they need to improve and reinforce through leader development. However, leader development generally occurs over the course of a career—in law enforcement,

in the military, in emergency services, and so on. Experience in various positions (e.g., police lieutenant, company commander, or fire captain) where goals for career progression can parallel and often provide overlapping opportunities for leader development. While these can be complementary opportunities, leader development and career planning are distinct. The U.S. Army presents an example of this.

The traditional officer leadership positions in the Army—platoon leader, company commander, battalion commander, and so on—are also part of an officer's career progression. They are opportunities that progress from tactical to operational, include educational prerequisites, and build the technical proficiency necessary for future roles with a broader scope. However, these distinctive "leader experience" opportunities take place over the course of fifteen to twenty years, with each lasting only a couple of years. As a result, there are ten to fifteen years where other more technical-, operations-, or education-focused opportunities lie on the career path.

Nonetheless, while we focus on *leader* development specifically, the best development plans are integrated with and complementary to career planning. Mapping career opportunities against leader development plans provides a framework upon which to flesh out development plan aspects (e.g., education, training, and experience). Further, any leader development plan should target KSAAs needed not only in the current position but in the next position in the leader's career path as well.

For individuals and organizations, complementary leader development and career planning are also a matter of practicality, because "traditional" leadership positions are limited or may not even exist in highly specialized fields. Therefore, organizations should not rely solely on typical leadership roles but should work deliberately to build leadership potential. This helps avoid situations where there is a dearth of talented leaders. Properly managed leader development programs build the bench of leadership talent and support unanticipated transitions.

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Development Plan Characteristics

As we begin building individual development plans, recognize a distinction between what we have already highlighted as important for leader development programs generally (e.g., program maturity, level of focus, time horizon) and considerations for designing individual development plans to produce better results. Particularly, best practices for development indicate that the most effective education, training, and experience events are challenging and include social support.[24] Therefore, the process of building a development plan starts with the KSAA map, which then informs the customized plan that incorporates the developmental challenges and social support the individual leader needs to build the desired KSAA outcomes for which he or she has gaps.

Challenge. Challenges come through the developmental mechanisms of education, training, and experience. When development is challenging, it pushes leaders outside of

their comfort level.[25] The push comes from events with increased complexity, increased responsibility, experiences outside of one's typical role, or with stressors such as time pressure. Even more, benefits of challenging events increase when perceived as opportunities for growth and development.

Social support. Workplace social support comes from relationships that provide emotional (e.g., empathy, concern, reassurance, and encouragement), appraisal (e.g., feedback that provides useful information to facilitate self-reflection and self-evaluation), informational (e.g., coaching/mentoring relationships that provide advice, information, and suggestions), and instrumental forms of support (i.e., directly helps leaders, freeing them up to focus on development). Support is important for self- and organization-directed development. The forms of support most often cited as important for leader development include feedback and face-to-face interactions characterized by personal involvement of supervisors and other organizational leaders in one's development.[26]

Mechanisms of Development: Education, Training, and Experience

The development plan varies according to whether it is targeting knowledge, skill, ability, or attribute. For example, consider the difference between a skill like decision making and an attribute like decisiveness. Decision making can be taught primarily through training, though it certainly benefits from experience in application. Decisiveness, however, comes with experience and is much harder to convey through education. Still, it is through a combination of education, training, and experience that a comprehensive development plan is built to address the developmental needs of leaders.

Education. Education is a long-term process that often includes multiple events to collectively build capacities for success across a range of tasks. Education is distinguished from training in that education is more *theory* focused. To capitalize on experiential learning, the processes of reflection and action should be informed, and it is through education that leaders gain knowledge of the ideals of leadership and the styles of effective leadership. Education builds knowledge that allows a leader to theorize more effectively as to which actions may be most effective for a given situation. Through building a plan with multiple education events, education and experience are integrated to optimize the value of experiential learning.

Training. Training is *application* focused. It emphasizes skills for immediate use in particular situations.[27] Training also includes the application and management of policies and procedures. Compared to education, training has a shorter duration and focuses on producing performance in a specific set of leader activities versus providing general knowledge. Therefore, leader skills such as those outlined in table 18.1 (e.g., decision making, goal setting, negotiations, and stress management) exemplify the topics of application-focused activities; however, if we understand the definition of training as application focused, even pursuing success in "negotiations" is too broad. For example, training in negotiation and decision making for an FBI crisis negotiation unit is different—in terms

of methods and measures of success—from training in negotiations for most local law enforcement teams. While the underlying principles may be the same, training must be contextually specific to enable successful application.

Experience. To develop as a leader, one must play the long game. Hands-on experience enacting leadership is the arena in which leaders experiment in applying what they have learned in education and training. Whether self- or organization directed, it is critical that the plan provides a pathway of experience. To do that, consider what key roles or jobs will provide relevant, challenging experience as a leader to practice the focal KSAAs. One common approach to a pathway of experience involves building a career path for each leader. But if there are limited "key leader" positions, as noted above, it is critical to identify a variety of possible experiences that allow all leaders the opportunity to address deficiencies in KSAAs. So, the KSAA map and gap analysis (Steps 1 and 2) help individuals and organizations thoughtfully identify and plan experiences in key leadership and other important developmental opportunities. Certainly, opportunities like job assignments and project-based learning are common practices for career development—and should be used. However, we again emphasize that job assignments and project-based learning are often geared toward building technical proficiency. Organizations need both technical and leader proficiency, so in building a plan for *leader* development, do not forget to account for *leader* benefits in selecting or creating key experiences.

Ultimately, leader development is a long-term process of learning and growth grounded in experience. Experiential learning theory defines this long-term process as a process of adaptation.[28] But, adaptation to what? If we understand "leader" as being, in part, an identity a person adopts, there are norms, values, attitudes, and self-beliefs associated with that identity, and development through experiential learning supports the lifelong process of assimilating and adopting knowledge and skills as part of one's larger self-identity.[29] In the model of experiential learning developed by Kolb, there is a spiral of learning that occurs through a recursive process of experience, reflection, thinking, and acting.[30] Many of us who operate in dangerous contexts have heard of the OODA loop: observe, orient, decide, and act—repeating the loop as fast as you can . . . or at least faster than the enemy/threat. While not exactly the same, the idea of following an iterative process—a loop—is the same for experiential learning; but as one cycles through multiple iterations of learning, that learning increases as the individual "learns how to learn." Thus, rather than a repetitive circle, it is an upward spiral of growth.

In short, experience is part of the process of adaptation to the role of leader. However, experience can vary from unplanned (though possibly fortuitous) to purposeful, and since we are describing the step of "develop a plan" we are pointing to building leader development plans that include a purposeful set of experiences characterized by deliberate reflection, thinking, and action, coupled with external measurement and feedback.

Education, training, and experience: an example. An application in developing mentorship ability will help clarify the distinctions between experience, training, and education.

As we noted above, the ability to mentor others is important for leaders. Ideally, this ability is developed through education, training, *and* experience. Education often logically comes first—defining mentorship conceptually, teaching mentoring and perhaps some human psychology/human development theories/concepts, and a framework with the steps to mentor others. General conceptual knowledge of mentorship is followed by training—the *application* of knowledge in a classroom setting or simulated environment where one learns and then *practices* the specific skills of mentoring, such as techniques to help a mentee set personal goals and give feedback and advice. During practice they experience successes and mistakes without the "real world" consequences. Finally, there is experience. Beyond simply carrying out the act of mentoring another individual and the solidification of skills into abilities, mentoring experience also promotes attribute development, such as the psychological mindset shift from *me* to *them* and formation of the identity of *being* a mentor. Experience is contextually specific, presenting nuances and considerations unique to one's position and organizational setting. If mentorship is a key KSAA for the organization, it should be included in regular performance assessments.

Most KSAAs benefit from this iterative process of education, training, and experience, but time, budget, priorities, and resources often limit the process to education and training, or even just training. Therefore, while we strongly recommend a mix of education, training, and experience, that may not be possible for every KSAA on the KSAA map. Developers then need to accept the deficiencies that will occur in the development of their leaders and promote self-development.

Developmental Assessment Plan

The assessment plan must be focused to measure the effectiveness of developing the specific KSAAs being targeted for development. The purpose of this is twofold. First, it allows assessment of growth in the developing leader. Without incremental assessment, a development plan lacks the feedback essential for guiding development.[31] Feedback allows the leader and the coach/mentor to gauge the effectiveness of the leader's behaviors and progress toward achieving development goals and facilitates the experiential learning that occurs through spirals of learning. Seeing visible change and growth significantly increases the likelihood that leaders will utilize and continue to practice the KSAAs taught in their development program.[32]

The second purpose of the assessment plan is for the organization: it allows human resources personnel and leader-developers to assess the validity and effectiveness of the training, education, and experience program they manage. It is therefore critical that the development plan and assessment plan share the same set of KSAAs, as otherwise the organization is not measuring what it is intending to develop.[33] This again highlights our point above that organizations should be careful in selecting off-the-shelf training or assessment programs from vendors; it is important to ensure the program matches and is consistent with the organization's KSAA map.

Without effective assessment, the effectiveness of the development plan becomes very subjective. Indeed, organizational best practices for achieving organizational goals include integration with the performance management system. In that way, performance management is included in routine performance assessment discussions, explicitly connects important KSAAs to performance effectiveness, and to the extent effective performance leads to promotion and selection for key leader positions, the critical KSAAs are incentivized. In all, the targeting of KSAAs and integration of KSAA-specific assessment foster a system of accountability for development and lead to greater motivation to develop those KSAAs.

Closing Thoughts on Development Planning

While leadership development is challenging regardless of the driver, one aspect of Step 3 is particularly challenging for individuals—social support. Without an integrated leader development program that provides support, individuals struggle to find the emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental support that facilitates development. For individuals seeking support, it often means seeking out multiple people—the coach who possesses the specific knowledge of one's position as well as the mentor who more broadly understands how to navigate the challenges of leadership. Individuals pursuing the leader development process must proactively seek the support they need.

Every leader—even those in mature, organization-directed development settings—will experience peaks and valleys in the amount of self-directed development their growth requires. Given the experiential nature of leader development, some jobs support leader experience (with those times requiring greater focus on optimizing the lessons from experience), and other jobs are more focused on technical, operational experience (with those requiring greater focus on self-development through informal or formal education opportunities).

Step 4. Implement the Plan

This step focuses on increasing the likelihood that a leader's developmental plan will begin and persist through completion. Plan implementation involves tangible requirements including communication, accountability, and focus. The intangible factor of developmental readiness also plays a role in the likelihood of implementation.

Communication. Communication involves conveying the importance of development, the KSAAs of focus, the process in place, timelines associated with the process, and any incentives for completion. A good leader development plan will have a role for the leader as well as the developer. At the organizational level, implementation means process changes throughout the organization, including the allocation of resources, and understanding the importance of leader development. Communication serves a vital role in creating a culture that promotes development and a climate safe for those developing as leaders.

Accountability. Accountability is occasionally a feature of developmental plans, but it often falls on the individual working to balance development with day-to-day job requirements. Therefore, accountability deserves attention in plan implementation. This occurs by holding individuals *and* the organization accountable for the developmental plans. For individuals, accountability comes from hard requirements—such as making educational or experiential assignments mandatory prerequisites for pay increases, promotion, or other benefits that come with career progression. For the organization, mechanisms such as policies and audits create institutional accountability.

Focus. Focus is a matter of practicality and prioritization. As with so many things in organizational life, practicality drives execution. That is, the practical requirement is more likely to occur than the impractical. Also, priority requirements are more likely to occur. Thus, focus is a combination of practicality and priority—which acknowledges the reality that organizational initiatives often seem to outnumber the people and resources available to execute them. For leader development plans to happen, organizations should be selective in the initiatives they take on. If leader development is truly important, be selective in choosing to focus on leader development while excluding other lower-priority initiatives. Indeed, plan implementation is less a "how to" step than an exercise in commitment and perseverance. Therefore, in addition to communication, accountability, and focus, a discussion of *developmental readiness* helps convey how individual and organizational drivers increase the likelihood of successfully executing developmental plans.

Developmental readiness. Not all leaders are "ready" to develop, nor is every organization "ready" to guide and promote its leaders' development. Developmental readiness is thus both an individual state that predisposes one toward development and an organizational characteristic that operates as a catalyst for leadership development. In short, developmental readiness is both an individual and an organizational phenomenon (see chapter 13).[34]

Individual. Individual developmental readiness consists of motivation and ability. Motivation to develop is shaped by interest, having a learning orientation, and developmental efficacy (confidence). Ability to develop is influenced by self-awareness, self-complexity, and metacognitive ability.[35] As to motivation, the extent to which an individual sees value in developing a set of KSAAs affects that person's engagement and ownership in the development process. One's learning orientation involves belief about the ability to grow and change. While some people see themselves as more *fixed* ("can't teach an old dog new tricks"), others see themselves as able to grow and change. Those who believe they can and should develop and who value feedback as being developmental are more inclined to develop as leaders than those who do not.[36] Finally, motivation benefits from the confidence that individuals can learn and develop the specific KSAAs in their plan, or more generally to develop as a leader, which is called developmental efficacy.

The second element of developmental readiness is the ability to develop.[37] This ability is promoted first through self-awareness, or clarity of knowledge about oneself. Individuals with higher self-awareness are more able to make accurate self-assessments, interpret how feedback relates to themselves, and integrate the new KSAAs into their identity.[38] Self-complexity entails having a rich and complex understanding of the self, which enhances the ability to "process, interpret, and appropriate new developmental experiences."[39] Leaders with a simple understanding of their self-identity will be less able to apply the nuances of what they are learning to their development. A more complex leader can better understand the shifts and adjustments of his or her leadership across varied contexts. Lastly, metacognitive ability, or a leader's ability to *think about their thinking*, "enables richer processing and meaning-making concerning developmental experiences."[40] Leaders higher in metacognitive ability will not just participate in developmental experiences but will also reflect more deliberately during those experiences on what they are learning, how they are changing, and how they can apply what is learned in the future.

For a discussion of how developmental readiness can be promoted in organizational leaders we refer readers to chapter 13. Suffice it to say here that the elements of developmental readiness are malleable/changeable, and thus organizations can be intentional in building the facets of developmental readiness in their leaders. Role models can set the example for development and inspire junior leaders to mimic their efforts to develop themselves while showing the importance of continued development. Senior leaders can also build efficacy/confidence in junior leaders by showing junior leaders tools and processes to use and giving them support as they develop.

Organizational. For the organization, developmental readiness involves the formalization of social support and the creation of a learning/development culture. We have repeatedly noted the importance of support as part of the design of the developmental plan as well as during its execution. But support is more than a feature of the plan. It is a feature of the organizational learning environment that promotes individual motivation and ability for development. Thus, organizations, like individuals, vary in their developmental readiness.

Organization-level developmental readiness occurs through the presence of a culture that values learning, as seen through formalized mechanisms and resources for promoting and supporting learning. A learning culture also involves adequate "freedom to fail," whereby leaders can experiment and try new skills and behaviors and, so long as they exercise prudent risk, are not punished for reasonable failures. More broadly, the support for learning is apparent at all levels of the organization such that individual learners trust they have the space to take risks and learn from mistakes.

Step 5. Monitor Plan Effectiveness

Whether development is self-directed or organization directed, it is important to track its progress and determine results. In traditional organizations, return on investment (ROI) features prominently as a measure of performance—typically as a financial return—for assessing the value of organizational initiatives. For developmental initiatives, results can be measured in a number of ways, from learning outcomes to financial outcomes like ROI.

Many organizations simply assume that their various leader development efforts are effective—not only in producing the specific desired outcomes for the leader but in generally producing outcomes that improve organizational effectiveness. While research demonstrates the effectiveness of managerial training and leader development programs—particularly if they include features such as a gap analysis, feedback, and social support,[41] there is also ample proof that many poorly designed and executed development programs have no measurable impact. Thus, while there is evidence clearly supporting the value of leader development, organizations should not assume their programs are effective without validating that assumption.

Broad categories of effectiveness indicators include reactions, learning, transfer, and results,[42] each having several possible indicators. However, evidence suggests organizations should, at a minimum, assess proximal indicators of effectiveness, such as receptivity toward leader development programs and the learning *and* application of program content. A more comprehensive approach would consider objective results, including effectiveness of closing the leader-exemplar gap; improvements in leader effectiveness across affective, behavioral, cognitive, and organizational performance outcomes; and reductions in leadership failure.

CONCLUSION

The importance of leaders and the closed-system nature of dangerous-context organizations highlight the importance of leader development for producing talent ready to lead in our dynamic leadership contexts. Despite the importance of development, individuals and organizations struggle to navigate the flood of information from scholars, practitioners, and popular press headlines to determine whether leader development is worthwhile or how best to go about it. In this chapter, we focused on leader development for dangerous contexts: noting the two drivers of development, highlighting important development program characteristics, and outlining a five-step process to help individuals and organizations follow a deliberate process in building their leader development programs.

To help distill everything presented in this chapter, we close with a list of five key takeaways and a concise checklist to follow in building a development program (see figure 18.3). As we noted earlier, there is a lot to unpack in the topic of leader development. While we only scratched the surface in terms of the information available on the

Development Drivers:

- ☐ Individual-directed development
- ☐ Organization-directed development

Characteristics of Effective Programs:

- ☐ Program maturity (structured, standardized, and disciplined approach to development with validated content proven as effective in developing the focal KSAAs)
- ☐ Appropriate level of focus (i.e., tactical, operational, strategic)
- ☐ Time horizon (long-term plan for development)
- ☐ Assessment of development progress (measure learning and adoption/transfer of learning)
- ☐ Contextual specificity (training plan is developed with organizational context in mind, including composition, mission, organizational structure, and culture)
- ☐ Social support (comes from relationships that provide emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental forms of support with coaching, feedback, and face-to-face interactions with senior leaders as specific forms of support most often cited as important)

Five Steps of Development:

- ☐ Establish an exemplar
  - ○ What does your organization need (contextually specific/relevant)?
  - ○ Build a KSAA map (prioritize—you can't do it all)
- ☐ Conduct a gap analysis (self, individual, and/or organizational gap analysis—what are the developmental needs of each leader relative to the exemplar)
- ☐ Create a development plan to close the gap
  - ○ Education, training, and experience (that are challenging and have social support)
  - ○ Assessment of developmental progress
- ☐ Implement the plan
  - ○ Communication, accountability, and focus
  - ○ Developmental readiness
- ☐ Monitor plan effectiveness
  - ○ Measure: reactions, learning, transfer, and results

FIGURE 18.3. Leader Development Program Checklist

topic, our aim was to present clear, user-friendly best practices gleaned from decades of research and practice.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Leader development is a *process*—not a "one-and-done" seminar. Follow a long-term, structured process with a goal in mind. Whether it is an individually defined ideal self, an organization-defined exemplar, or preferably both, these exemplars create a benchmark against which development is designed and directed. We suggest a process of five steps. The long-term process should be experiential and iterative, cycling through a spiral of learning involving experience, reflection, thinking, and acting. The learning experiences that support the iterative process of development come through the three mechanisms of development: education, training, and experience.

2. The *self-directed* and *organization-directed* drivers of development are complementary. Individuals should pursue both. Organizations should support both.
3. The characteristics of effective development programs, development plans, and assessments come from substantive research supporting their importance. The more you can build into your development plan(s) and programs, the better. We detail these characteristics above and list them in the leader development program checklist in figure 18.3.
4. Leader development and career planning are complementary. Integrating leader development and career planning is ideal.
5. Prioritize. Make leader development your priority, then establish developmental priorities and be willing to trim the list. You cannot do it all.

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CHAPTER 19

Operating in Dynamic and Complex Social and Political Environments

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A PANDEMIC AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY WITHOUT ONE, sickness and death on a global scale, businesses shuttered, unemployment at record highs, the economy in free fall. Social unrest, demonstrations in the streets calling for police reform, social justice, and an end to systemic racism. Politicians trying to calm public fears and desperate to gain the upper hand as a national election season unfolded. It was a challenging time in America for leaders at all levels of government, business, education, public safety, and healthcare as they faced both new and long-simmering problems.

In this chapter we explore what leaders in two sectors of society—public safety and public health—did to successfully deal with the challenges they faced in their dynamic and complex social and political environments. Our focus is on senior leaders—those at the top of large public organizations—because their roles demand careful attention to both their organizations' internal operations and their external environment. Senior leaders sit close to the boundaries of their organizations, adding value to the extent that they can manage environmental forces while leading internally to accomplish their missions. Coauthors Edward (Ed) Flynn and Richard (Rick) Toomey served in senior leadership positions in policing and public health respectively. During his ten-year tenure as chief of police in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Ed faced the challenges of dealing with social unrest, political tensions, and the attendant ethical dilemmas of leadership in large and complex public safety organizations. Rick's experiences as director of the Department of Health and Environmental Control for the state of South Carolina illustrate how public health leaders balance the social and political demands of diverse stakeholders to lead effectively during a dangerous global pandemic. Dr. M. Linda Hawes, a physician at Beaufort Memorial Hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina, offers her frontline perspective on how leadership decisions at the senior levels of government and public health impact the ability of

essential healthcare professionals to care for patients with life-threatening illnesses during a pandemic. Taken together, these leaders' stories provide a guide for senior leaders to lead effectively in complex and dynamic social and political environments.

THE NATURE OF COMPLEX AND DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS

Chapter 14 introduced the concept of VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) to describe the characteristics of the external environment in which many sectors of society operate. VUCA addresses the accelerating rate of change (volatility), the lack of predictability (uncertainty), the interconnectedness of cause-and-effect forces (complexity), and the strong potential for misreads (ambiguity) in society today. What characterizes VUCA in the dynamic and complex social and political environments of public safety and public health organizations? Let us examine each of VUCA's four components as they apply to those organizations.

Volatile. Rapidly changing environments require leaders and their organizations to make rapid adjustments in response. Police chiefs have had to adapt to new threats to public safety, whether from riots following officer-involved shootings of unarmed black citizens or white supremist–inspired domestic terrorism. Likewise, the public health community worldwide suddenly faced a new and dangerous disease. While scientific research tends to be slow and deliberate, the ever-increasing infection rates, community unease, and political pressures demanded immediate solutions. Public health officials had to respond quickly in an environment where some stakeholders refused to cooperate and others denied the pandemic's existence. As new research findings yielded a deeper understanding of the coronavirus, public health recommendations had to be adjusted, causing confusion, anxiety, and mistrust in some segments of the population.

Uncertain. These environments often present leaders with novel challenges when there are no standard operating procedures or rules of engagement. Police chiefs presented with rapidly escalating civil unrest had to adapt current standard procedures to respond effectively to new situations. The novel coronavirus—emphasis on "novel"—presented public health leaders with a new coronavirus strain for which they had no proven treatment or efficacious vaccine.

Complex. Public safety and healthcare environments have multiple stakeholders who place conflicting demands on organizational leaders. These stakeholders have competing agendas, viewpoints, and values. Police chiefs faced demands from political leaders and citizens to quell civil disturbances with force, speed, and efficiency while meeting others' demands for calm in the midst of chaos, fair treatment of all citizens, and even downsizing or defunding of police departments. Public health leaders had to balance science-driven protocols they believed would stop the spread of the coronavirus with politicians' and citizens' demands to reopen businesses and schools. Those competing demands occasionally posed ethical dilemmas for public health leaders trying to reconcile professional standards with various stakeholder expectations.

Ambiguous. High-stakes environments with broad-ranging implications for life-and-death decisions and actions present opportunities for miscues that may have potentially profound impacts on people's lives. Miscues in response to a racially charged civil disturbance can lead to personal injury and property destruction, further fanning the flames of unrest and violence. Miscues in public health can lead to unnecessary harm to the populace.

FRAMING LEADERSHIP IN DYNAMIC AND COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

Now that we have an idea of the complex and high-stakes environments in which today's leaders must work, let us look at some theoretical tools to conceptualize solutions in a VUCA world. Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal reviewed a variety of social science disciplines—psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, and organizational studies—to understand what each discipline contributes to an overall understanding of the means and the ends of leadership. They identified four frames through which leaders can view and understand the challenges they face.[1] They propose that the more frames of reference leaders use to understand the challenges they face, the more effective they will be in leading their organizations. This idea is particularly true for senior leaders because their broader perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the social and political environments in which they operate—something a VUCA world requires.

Bolman and Deal's four frames are structural, human resource, political, and symbolic, described as follows.

The *structural frame* focuses on how an organization is set up to achieve its mission; it assumes that organizations are rational enterprises with formal rules and clearly specified roles. Specialization, division of labor, and coordination of effort among individuals, groups, and functions are fundamental concerns within this framework. From a structural perspective, leaders exercise influence by promulgating policies, procedures, processes, practices, structures, and systems. When leaders address challenges by adding specialized functions, hiring new personnel, reorganizing subunits, adopting new systems, routinizing work processes, or implementing new policies, they are leading from a structural perspective.

The *human resource frame* focuses on the relationship between the individual employee and the larger organization. It assumes organizations exist to serve human needs and there is a reciprocal relationship, or "informal contract," between the individual and the organization. This frame emphasizes individual employee motivation, morale, expertise, and collective teamwork. Leaders rely on employee training and personnel management to match individual needs with organizational requirements to accomplish the mission.

The first two frames, structural and human resource, are common ways of understanding organizational leadership for frontline leaders and middle-level managers. Although all four frames are relevant to leaders throughout an organization, forming teams, organizing individual and group efforts, and motivating employees to achieve organizational goals—activities associated with the first two frames—are often the central

focus of leadership at lower levels. At higher levels, a more encompassing understanding of leadership is needed that requires the use of the last two frames as well.

The *political frame* emphasizes the allocation of power and scarce resources both within an organization and in its surrounding environment. It assumes that organizations are coalitions of diverse individuals and groups with different interests, values, and beliefs. Think of a cross-functional team made up of representatives from different areas of the organization (e.g., operations, legal, human resources, marketing and sales, and logistics), where members advocate for their functions' beliefs and values concerning the means and ends of work. A task force made up of representatives from various agencies in a community is an example. From the political frame of reference, the leader's role is to build coalitions, negotiate different needs, and manage conflict among these diverse individuals to form a cohesive group capable of accomplishing the organization's mission. As noted earlier, in a VUCA environment, senior leaders must balance the needs of internal and external stakeholders who have competing values and beliefs. The political frame brings understanding to these leadership challenges.

The *symbolic frame* focuses on how a leader instills meaning, purpose, and values into an organization and how individuals draw their meaning through their work. Symbols, rituals, and ceremonies are ways for leaders to communicate the values and reinforce the vision of the organization. These aspects are important features of the organization's culture, and shaping and/or maintaining them is a critical responsibility of leaders, particularly at senior levels.[2]

In the following sections, we examine the actions of our public safety and public health co-collaborators as they operated in VUCA environments. The case studies illustrate how these senior leaders employed each of these frames of leadership and how using all four frames broadened their understanding of the environment and equipped them with a comprehensive set of leader actions to succeed in complex and dynamic environments.

CASE STUDY: PUBLIC SAFETY AND POLICING

Ed Flynn is a highly experienced police leader whose career spanned the entire spectrum of policing from patrol officer through a ten-year stint as the chief of police in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He holds a bachelor of arts degree from LaSalle University in Philadelphia and a master's degree, and has completed the PhD course work in criminal justice from John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. Ed is a graduate of the FBI's National Academy and its National Executive Institute and was an National Institute of Justice Pickett Fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School. He has received numerous awards from prestigious police organizations and universities in the United States and Great Britain. This case study shows how Ed learned and effectively used all four of Bolman and Deal's frames in highly charged, complex environments.

Ed views preparing a police department and its officers to achieve optimum outcomes while accomplishing its mission as the core responsibility of a police chief. To do this, police

leaders must ensure that their department's structural and human resource elements are functional and then, before a crisis, create a culture that reflects the department's mission, vision, and values. Additionally, leaders must actively engage the community's stakeholders to make space for their department to work. These tasks are accomplished by assessing and shaping a culture; gaining an understanding of the department's environment; communicating effectively both within and outside the department; and having personal resilience, presence, and moral courage.

Learning the Culture

Ed is quick to point out that a senior leader needs to understand a department's existing culture (symbolic frame) and acknowledge it while trying to change it. Culture is a powerful influence in departments. Failing to take it into account will doom a leader trying to change it.

Ed's law enforcement career began in Jersey City, New Jersey. There he moved through the ranks from officer to captain serving in a wide variety of jobs as he learned the basics of policing: tactics, operations, administration, small-unit leadership (structural and human resource frames), and police culture (symbolic frame)—concepts that permeate policing in all departments.

Ed learned that policing requires an officer to behave in a way counter to what most individuals consider polite. Police officers are required to stare, get into other people's business, and ask embarrassing questions. He also learned that a police officer is expected to independently make difficult decisions in ambiguous situations with insufficient (and/or inaccurate) information. Also among his early career observations, Ed learned that policing is less about enforcing the law and more about fixing things that frighten, anger, hurt, or bother people, which sometimes translates to merely being there when no "traditional" policing action is available.

As Ed's experience grew, he learned that police officers are, in some ways, risk averse. Physical courage is highly valued, even at risk of life. But moral courage—the willingness to challenge convention or wrongdoing—is avoided because it presents a risk to career and pension. This powerful negative motivator can foster a mindset in which responsibility for actions is passed to someone else, potentially someone less competent.

Ed learned that while good officers want recognition, above all else they want someone to pay attention to bad officers—the lazy, the incompetent, and the no-shows. Most public safety agencies do a good job recognizing certain types of heroism, but many do a very bad job addressing overt malfeasance or incompetence. There are several reasons for that—reasons with which Ed would repeatedly wrestle as chief.

A Chief's Lessons Learned

Once Ed had learned the structural and human resource frames in Jersey City, he moved on to a series of senior police executive positions, rising through progressively larger

organizations, honing his senior leadership skills, and learning the political and symbolic frames.

After leaving Jersey City, Ed was hired as the chief in Braintree, Massachusetts. Although Braintree appeared to be an idyllic New England community, the city of 35,000 with a police force of 80 had a number of governance issues. Ed was hired (appointed) by the city's political leaders.[3] His appointment meant he had a contract for a finite amount of time and had the support of those who had hired him only so long as they remained influential in Braintree politics. He further realized that the community leaders had appointed an outside chief because they wanted a fresh face, someone who would show that those governing the community were serious about resolving the issue(s) at hand. For a police chief like Ed, who was devoted to improving departments and communities, this situation presented both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because there were problems, and an opportunity because a window of time existed where almost everyone was agreeable to change. Nevertheless, Ed and the newly appointed city manager learned that change is tough, even in a favorable political environment.

Ed quickly got a feel for his new job, learning things about the department and its environment. Early in his tenure, Ed would leave staff meetings with long lists of things to do. But then he remembered the accountability lesson he learned in Jersey City. By turning the tables and asking for reports and potential solutions to issues raised during the staff meetings, Ed successfully delegated work to those being paid to do it.

The department was small and set in its ways. Its officers and their union opposed almost all of Ed's changes. The eighty-member Braintree Police Department generated more grievances during Ed's four years there than the thousand-member Jersey City department did in all his years there. Over time, police unions have become extraordinarily powerful and able to block change. To illustrate the point, Ed recounted a story about a Braintree officer who threw his wife down a flight of stairs. She eventually died of her injuries. With worker-protection actions, it took five years to fire the officer. This environment makes it exceedingly difficult for police departments to hold their employees accountable, but it is not impossible if one understands the process and is persistent.

Politicians (and politics) are also powerful environmental influences affecting a police chief's job. When politicians leave office, priorities and resources change. The politicians in Braintree who hired Ed supported his changes. Their reputations were tied to Ed's success as police chief, and he was often able to get their support to resolve police department structural and human resource issues. But over time, those politicians were replaced by politicians with different agendas who brought a new landscape for Ed to navigate. From this, Ed learned not to pick unnecessary fights with politicians. A chief might win a quote battle in the media and garner a few chuckles from his officers, but committee meetings and budget hearings with the politician he had embarrassed would be unnecessarily difficult for the department. Ed learned the importance of the political frame: It was much wiser and beneficial to have closed-door meetings with politicians and stand his ground

there, if necessary; in public the chief is far better off discussing the issues and not the personalities.

Lastly, the media, also part of the political frame, can be either a valuable ally or an irritant. In Braintree, Ed built an alliance with an influential newspaper and local television stations. His public speaking skills paid dividends with the media, who portrayed him favorably as a reform-minded chief, giving Ed a popular reputation with local middle-class citizens. Media and citizen support along with his popular image gave Ed lots of space to operate in the Braintree Police Department—a critical component of a chief's job.

Ed's career as a senior police executive continued through chief and law enforcement executive positions in Chelsea, Massachusetts; Arlington, Virginia; the Massachusetts Secretary of Public Safety; and Springfield, Massachusetts. During these years Ed realized that in a VUCA environment a chief needs to address the stress generated by the daily grind. Understanding the meaning that officers derive from their work and the stresses of their job, he came to believe it was his role as a leader to model tools to manage work stress. Over the years as he prepared for promotion boards and various academic and professional courses, he found reading helpful; it provided perspective into his professional world and was also an excellent stress reliever. Reading exposed him to numerous views on policing in society, sociology, and criminology; and he learned from the biographies of other leaders how they had successfully navigated their own dynamic and complex social and political environments.

Putting It All Together

Following a string of highly successful positions, Ed was hired in Milwaukee to address a soaring crime rate that was undercutting the city's economic development. His first step was to create the right culture—a blend of all four Bolman and Deal frames consisting of a multiphase process involving people, training, communications, leader presence, and alignment of the department's operations with its mission, vision, and values.

The hallmark of every one of Ed's administrations was selecting the right people for leadership positions and providing them with the appropriate training. In Milwaukee, Ed restructured his command staff and through careful hiring selected a group of eager, thoughtful, and insightful people who embraced the department's evolving mission, vision, and values. Ed delegated responsibilities to subordinates along with the resources they needed, then managed by outcomes (versus by exception). He found this approach of allowing followers to plan, execute, and evaluate their actions while holding them accountable for their outcomes was extraordinarily empowering. It was also an excellent way to train current leaders and identify future ones.

Ed worked to shift his department's culture toward the idea that police personnel were "officers" much like military officers. This symbolic shift in police culture required police officers to be flexible and adaptable and trained in ethical leadership, not just individuals who blindly followed orders. To this end, he sought to embed an ethos of

ethical leadership in all elements of the department's operations. Officers were taught (and encouraged) to think and make decisions within the scope of the task at hand and the department's mission, vision, and values. As all scenarios cannot be foreseen, officers needed to understand how to adapt in widely varying situations while still accomplishing the mission.

When the Black Lives Matter demonstrations occurred, Ed and his command staff developed plans based on a strategy to "coordinate" the demonstrations. The plan was to have a police presence, but not in riot gear or using military-style equipment. Police officers would keep demonstrators off highways and out of mass transit but otherwise allow them their right to peacefully demonstrate. Behind the scenes, traffic officers diverted traffic, and police in reaction teams and riot gear were held out of sight, but ready if needed. The public face of the department (and a reflection of its culture) was a calm presence determined to maintain order while allowing peaceful demonstration and depriving activists of confrontations with police and associated public-relations coups.

To successfully execute this plan and reinforce this cultural shift, Ed realized that he needed to communicate not only the mission but also the vision and rationale on which it was based. As he implemented the new culture he had to be mindful of the old culture of blindly following orders. He realized that not everyone would agree with his plan to address the protests, but he found that officers respected him for explaining the entirety of the operation. All too often, Ed realized, police officers were frustrated by simply being told to do something without explanation.

A chief must never forget how important it is to communicate empathy with his or her officers. Unlike leaders in many other professions, police chiefs rise through the ranks; and while it may have been twenty or thirty years since they were last on the street, the nuts and bolts of the job do not change. Chiefs need to use their experience when talking with officers. Connecting with officers, expressing empathy, and explaining "why" proved effective in Milwaukee.

Equally important in achieving success was Ed's presence at critical events. His physical presence showed support for his officers and afforded the opportunity to both supervise the plan and make changes as the situation dictated.

Earlier we discussed how police agencies do a reasonably good job recognizing certain types of heroism but struggle with holding incompetent and malicious officers accountable for their behavior. In Milwaukee, Ed addressed the human resource frame by revising the department's process for adverse personnel actions. He replaced the traditional "Table of Punishments" with a "Code of Conduct" anchored in the department's mission, vision, and values. By doing so, he also demonstrated symbolic leadership, helping police officers understand the meaning of their service to the community. When an officer's adverse action was being reviewed, the new process evaluated the officer's actions against the department's mission, vision, and values. In determining the consequences, the officer's experience with and training in the matter at hand, intention, discipline record, and the

amount of harm caused by the behavior were factored in. This effectively aligned the misconduct with the consequence meted out.

Below are two illustrations of how Ed's work in all four of Bolman and Deal's frames paid off.

In April 2014 a reasonably well-dressed man was acting bizarrely in a downtown Milwaukee park. People in the area were unnerved by his behavior and called the police. The officer on duty walking the beat was not available, so a patrol car with two officers was dispatched to the scene. They evaluated the person and situation. In accordance with their crisis intervention training, they determined that the man was mentally ill, but as he was neither breaking any law nor a threat to himself or others, they departed. There was nothing for them to do.

A short time later, the officer assigned to walk the beat arrived to find the same man lying on the sidewalk. This officer confronted the man and, unlike the two previous police officers, felt the man was a threat. The beat officer initiated a series of actions (having the man stand up, frisking him for weapons) that put the officer at a tactical disadvantage. The actions precipitated a physical altercation during which the beat officer lost his baton. The man retrieved the baton and attacked the police officer with it. The beat officer, now fearing for his life, shot and killed the man.

Ed went to the scene, was briefed, and held a news conference relating the information that was known at the time to the media and public. The fact that the officer was white and the deceased man black created a civic outcry. Ed, while acknowledging the police officer's action, also addressed the county's poorly resourced mental health system, expressing his hope that this tragedy would be an incentive to reevaluate and resource the county's mental healthcare needs.

Through the rest of April into July the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) continued to investigate the tragic death as public protests continued. In August, a violent confrontation between police and the public in Ferguson, Missouri, captured the nation's attention. As a result, demonstrations in Milwaukee expanded, bringing the April shooting back into the public's view. During this entire period Ed defended his officer's use of deadly force. In the fall, Internal Affairs concluded its investigation into the incident. The investigation indicated that the beat officer's report about the events surrounding the shooting was suspect and that his tactical decisions (having the man stand then frisking him) created the life-threatening situation in which the officer found himself. His own incompetence created the situation where he was forced to defend himself by shooting the man. While the officer's use of force was justified, his actions prior to the shooting were not. The investigation recommended significant administrative punishment for the beat officer, but not firing him.

However, Ed's thought process was different. He saw two sets of officers responding to the same situation achieving vastly different outcomes. All three of the officers had received the same crisis intervention training and had similar job experience and

disciplinary records, yet the beat officer made a series of poor tactical decisions that led to a death. Even though the district attorney (DA) had not yet decided whether to charge the beat officer or exonerate his use of deadly force, Ed felt that the only ethical decision was to immediately fire the beat officer for incompetence.

Ed had to walk a fine line in announcing the officer's firing because he had to separate the officer's legal right to defend himself from the firing for incompetence. Protecting the officer's right to self-defense was critical to the safety of every police officer in the department, but the decision to fire the officer for incompetence was equally important. He felt he needed to hold a substandard police officer accountable. Ed's decision to fire the officer prior to the DA's decision to charge was one of the first such actions in the nation, but several other agencies have followed suit since. While this decision was unpopular on all sides, Ed points out, there was no other choice for an ethical leader. This example illustrates the chief's world. He or she is in the middle of politics, unions, civic activists, the public, and his or her officers, all with their own, often conflicting, agendas.

An incident that took place two years later further illustrates leadership in the dynamic and complex social and political environment of a chief.

In August 2016 two MPD police officers in an unmarked car followed a car into a dead-end street. The police officers were patrolling the neighborhood in response to citizen complaints about drug dealing. The officers parked and watched. After a short time, the car's occupant walked in front of their unmarked police car, and the officers saw a .40-caliber pistol in the man's waistband. The police officers immediately turned on their body cameras and gave chase. The suspect pulled out the gun and ran between two houses, but his escape was blocked by a chain-link fence. As the assailant tried to climb the fence, he dropped the gun. He stopped and bent down to pick it up. As he stood, he turned toward the police officers, raising his arm with the gun pointed toward them. An officer shot the man once. The man continued his escape by tossing the gun in the direction of his flight and starting up the fence again. Losing his grip, the man fell back toward the police officer, who fired a second shot. Elapsed time between shots was approximately 1.8 seconds. The suspect was dead.

Milwaukee police quickly responded and took control of the shooting scene. However, Wisconsin law now required that police-involved shootings be investigated by state homicide investigators. This meant that MPD could not process the scene or move the body. They were required to wait while state investigators drove from Madison, ninety miles away. While they were waiting, associates of the deceased spread the word of a police shooting, and crowds gathered. MPD took crowd control measures, but the crowds grew and became confrontational; objects were thrown at police, and by nightfall rioting had erupted.

Ed was in Texas at his mother-in-law's funeral when he was briefed on the incident. He arranged to fly back to Milwaukee the first thing in the morning. Watching the 5:00 a.m. news in Dallas, he saw that there was full-scale rioting in Milwaukee and it was now a national news story.

The second day following the shooting, with the help of neighboring law enforcement agencies, MPD reached a critical mass of personnel and gained control of the streets. As before, armored vehicles and riot-equipped officers were held out of sight in reserve. Vans with four to six officers responded to hot spots, and officers patrolled the streets. MPD wanted to show restraint and avoid confrontation. Nevertheless, tensions were extraordinarily high, and the national media watched closely.

To reduce tensions, Ed and his command staff, fully understanding the political frame, reached out to community leaders throughout the city. Police leaders and the mayor met with these leaders and asked them to help lower the temperature through their contacts using whatever means they had at their disposal: barbeques, meetings, social media, et cetera.

On the first night of rioting, fourteen arrests were made. The second night, as community leaders and police attempted to lower the temperature, significantly fewer arrests were made. On the third night there were no arrests; once the violence waned and peace was restored, the national media left town. During the entire time, the police did not fire a single shot; nor did they injure anyone. While the local media did not understand how intentional and effective the MPD strategy had been, the *Christian Science Monitor* did print an editorial saying that Milwaukee had treated the tense racial situation correctly and had established a model for other cities to follow.

When Ed was briefed on the status of the shooting investigation on the second day of rioting, he learned that the first shot clearly seemed to be an appropriate use of force; however, there was a question whether the second shot was excessive, even though only 1.8 seconds passed between the shots. Ed defended his officer's use of force.

Then separate information, unrelated to the shooting, was presented about the officer who fired the shots. At 2:00 a.m. the morning after the shooting, the officer dropped off a man at a local hospital who had been sexually assaulted. Investigation showed that the man had been raped by the officer—the same officer who had done the shooting the day before. The officer was arrested for rape. A simple solution would have been to meld these two situations and condemn the officer for both incidents. But Ed decided that the correct course of action was to keep the two acts separate. While he condemned the officer's unlawful second act, Ed continued to support the officer's proper use of force. Failing to do that, he felt, would cripple all officers' use of force in future events. It would also show a lack of respect both for their dangerous jobs and for their right to use force, when needed, to protect themselves. As he approached the press conference to address this situation, Ed had another fine line to walk. He had to defend the officer's correct use of force but tell the public that the same officer had been arrested for the rape.

In the aftermath of both incidents, Ed actively informed the department's officers by attending multiple roll calls and other forums explaining what had happened and the rationale for his two distinct decisions. The meetings were tense at times, and his words were met with grumbling. But Ed also received notes and email from officers who thanked

him for explaining what had happened and stating that once they understood his rationale, they agreed with him.

As illustrated above, Ed thinks that the biggest challenge for police executives today is to create an environment where officers can do their jobs. Internally, chiefs must ensure that structural and human resource frames are aligned with the mission, vision, and values of their department. Externally, chiefs must make space for their department to operate by pushing back against pressure from civic and political movements while always striving to present a positive image to citizens and the media.

Leadership Lessons for Police Executives

A leader in a dynamic and complex social and political environment should do the following.

1. Prepare the organization by assessing and shaping a culture before a crisis. To do this, the leader, executing all four of Bolman and Deal's frames, should hire the best staff and provide continuous training while identifying and developing leaders. He or she should also delegate, expect the staff to do their jobs, and hold them accountable for outcomes. Job performance and organizational culture should be linked to the department's mission, vision, and values. Last, a leader must create a mechanism to address behavior that does not measure up.

2. Understand the chief's world. In terms of the political frame, one must understand that a police chief has a "shelf life." He or she should act promptly when hired, build momentum by riding the concern for (or popularity of) the problem that got him or her hired, and use this temporary popularity to reach out and build positive relationships with the media, politicians, and the community. While politicians may have different agendas, they are the source of a department's resources. Use closed-door meetings to privately accomplish difficult tasks and/or address differences, but in public always refer to issues and not personalities. Realize that civil service regulations and unions are a given. Learn the rules and figure out how to achieve goals working within these constraints.

3. Communicate. Employing the human resource and political frames, look for ways to constantly communicate decisions and their rationales both within the department and to the public/stakeholders.

4. Be resilient and have presence. With the human resource frame in mind, a chief must take care of himself or herself while executing a high-stress job. He or she must project confidence, remaining keenly aware of their symbolic as well as institutional roles. Leading a police department in an exceedingly complex social and political environment cannot be done without accepting risk to reputation, strategic success, and employment. Managing institutional and cultural change is hard enough by itself, but it is compounded by the ideological pressures on the police from the entire spectrum of political opinion. Keeping police agencies accountable but nonpolitical, standing up for good policing and

admonishing bad policing while continuing to focus on the ethical accomplishment of policing's core responsibilities, requires self-mastery of all that is implied by VUCA.

CASE STUDY: PUBLIC HEALTH

Rick Toomey is a public health administrator with thirty-two years of experience at the local and state levels. With bachelor's and master's degrees in hospital administration from Duke University and a doctorate in health administration from the Medical University of South Carolina, Rick served as a healthcare consultant; as an executive at Nash Health Care Systems in Rocky Mount, North Carolina (including ten years as president and chief executive officer); and spent nine years as president and CEO of Beaufort Memorial Hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina. After retiring from Beaufort Memorial Hospital, Rick was selected by the board, nominated by the governor, and approved by the South Carolina Senate in February 2019 to serve as the director of the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

The DHEC's mission is "to improve the quality of life for all South Carolinians by protecting and promoting the health of the public and the environment."[4] South Carolina is one of a handful of states that combine public health and environmental control in the same organization. It is a complex organization.

Rick brought to this important state-level executive leadership role everything he had learned and practiced as a highly effective hospital CEO. He knew how to set the direction, build the culture, hire and empower the best people, be visible, and encourage everyone to achieve the mission. However, the scope of his responsibilities, the statewide reach of his organization, and the complexity of his external environment called on his ability to blend all the leadership frames, especially the political frame, into a coherent leadership strategy. How he achieved this, and especially how he dealt with the coronavirus pandemic, is the story that follows.

Shaping the Culture

When Rick assumed the leadership of DHEC, he followed the playbook that had made him so successful as a hospital CEO. In a dozen "town hall meetings" across the state he articulated a vision for the department, emphasizing priorities that would shape his stewardship of the organization: recruitment and retention of top-quality people and maintaining the reputation of DHEC through quality customer service that sustains trust in the organization. Because he believed in being visible and approachable, Rick made a commitment to visit all the sites under his charge, just as he made daily visits on the wards when he was a hospital CEO. He knew it was important to go to where his people worked to learn the organization and, more importantly, to show respect for their time and reinforce DHEC's values by his actions and encouragement.

When Rick joined DHEC, one of the senior leadership positions on his executive staff was unfilled, yet he was reluctant to hire someone immediately because he did not yet

understand the culture of the organization. Rick knew the person he hired must be a good match for the organization and able to reinforce the culture he was trying to create. He realized that organizational structure impacts culture. To avoid a mismatch, he held off hiring for six months until he understood the culture and what he was looking for in the position, because "you do not want to make a mistake with key leadership roles."

Human resource management systems also impact the organization's culture; hiring, training, promotion, grievance processes, and termination all reflect and reinforce the culture. As processes and systems, they are artifacts of the deeper values and meaning of the organization. For this reason, Rick paid close attention to grievance processes at DHEC. Early on, he overturned the recommendation from a manager regarding the punishment for an employee. Rick did not believe the punishment was fair, or that the manager had paid attention to detail in the case. Rick ruled in favor of the employee, reflecting the organization's value of fairness by listening to employees while requiring managers to work harder with employees prior to adverse actions.

Culture is also shaped by how leaders invest scarce resources. You can tell the values of an organization by how it spends its money. Because staff retention was a value for Rick, he invested in a comprehensive training program for all DHEC employees, even when his budget was tight. Training modules for a broad range of subjects were made accessible online to all employees at their job site. He underwrote this benefit for all members of the DHEC staff to reinforce the idea that everyone was important and deserved personal and professional development.

Building Trusting Relationships with Stakeholders

Rick understood that he had many more stakeholders to deal with as DHEC director than he did as a hospital CEO. In addition to the 3,300 employees working throughout South Carolina, he had to manage a complex external network of individuals and agencies whose support was essential to DHEC's mission success. At the top of his list was the DHEC board, which he left to become DHEC's director and which now oversaw his work. Other stakeholders included the governor, members of the state legislature, local and county politicians, hospitals, environmental groups, private citizens, and all the industries that DHEC regulates—everything from hospitals, nursing homes, public water systems, recycled tires, underground storage tanks, and restaurant inspections, to dock permits. Each stakeholder had an agenda and often conflicting expectations for how DHEC should operate, which would become clear not long after his first day on the job.

Rick quickly realized that his ability to support DHEC's employees and achieve the department's mission would require him to build strong relationships with multiple internal and external stakeholders. For example, only 35 to 40 percent of the DHEC budget comes from state appropriations. The rest comes from federal programs, fee-for-service revenues, or grants. Similarly, roughly 30 percent of DHEC employees are on the state's payroll; the others are funded by other sources. Consequently, when the state legislature

approves raises for DHEC employees, only a third of the workforce was affected. To maintain a culture of fairness and to retain employees, Rick had to find additional sources of funding so that pay raises could be distributed to all employees. This peculiarity in the structure of the DHEC budget impacted the entire organization. The DHEC director has to build relationships not only with the legislature's budget committee but also with other stakeholders who provide critical resources (fees) for the DHEC budget.

Building trusting relationships with lawmakers became an important part of his leadership at DHEC. Early in his tenure, Rick decided to spend two or three hours several times each week in the lobby between the two chambers of the state capital where he would be visible to legislators. They could talk to him if they had questions, and he could raise issues to discuss with them. Here again, the lessons of hospital rounds helped him build trust with a critical set of stakeholders by being accessible and approachable.

The Able Fire Crisis

Not long after Rick took over DHEC, a construction and demolition site in Ridgeland, South Carolina, managed by the Able Construction Company caught fire, producing toxic smoke and hazardous material that aroused the ire of the local community. Parents, school administrators, and residents of local retirement communities were outraged at the dangerous air quality in the area. State senators and representatives from the impacted communities echoed the concerns of their constituents, as did local environmental groups that demanded protection for the wetlands in the area. The Environmental Protection Agency came in to help control the fire while DHEC took charge of overseeing the cleanup. Although such emergency operations were not in the DHEC budget, Rick knew it was important to support the community. He spent about $5 million from his reserves and then worked with the legislature to plan for additional funding to compensate for this unprogrammed cost.

It was clear that all the parties shared common goals: put out the fire and clean up the hazardous site as fast as possible. Unfortunately, the fire flared up several times after it was ostensibly extinguished. Rick knew that he had to accomplish the cleanup mission with all speed while simultaneously taking safety precautions to protect people and the local ecosystem. Balancing speed with safety was his leadership challenge, and the problem required a creative solution. When the large amount of water used to finally suppress the fire threatened the local environment, DHEC invested the needed resources to capture the runoff before it entered the sewer system and caused additional damage to the environment.

Throughout the Able fire crisis, Rick and his staff met regularly with EPA representatives, politicians, environmental groups, and concerned citizens to ensure everyone understood the mitigation plan and to field comments, concerns, and questions about the project. The DHEC team even created a website that provided daily reports on air quality (using several monitors dispersed throughout the community) as well as the number of tons removed from the site. As a leader in this crisis that endangered the health and safety

of the public and the environment, Rick knew it was essential to be visible and in frequent communication with all constituents, directly and through multiple media platforms.

Local politicians occasionally responded to pressure from constituents by issuing statements and press releases criticizing the pace of the cleanup operations. Before issuing such statements, however, they assured Rick this was not an attack on DHEC but rather an attempt to show the public that they were doing something about the crisis. Behind the scenes, they offered encouragement to Rick and lobbied for additional funding for DHEC to address the situation. To Rick, this showed the trust and confidence they had in his leadership; it also brought home the political nature of his job and reinforced the importance of maintaining DHEC's reputation.

The Coronavirus Pandemic

In early March 2020, a year into Rick's tenure as DHEC director, the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in South Carolina. As the dangerous pandemic spread around the world and throughout the United States, leaders at the national, state, and local levels scrambled to understand the scope of the disease and determine how to protect the public. The governor, Rick, and the senior DHEC team knew they had to keep the citizens informed of the rapidly changing situation, so they instituted regular press conferences to update the public on what the state government was doing to stop the spread of the virus. During a news conference immediately after the first two cases were identified, a member of Rick's staff shared some personal information about one of the cases. The individual who had tested positive was incensed and complained through the DHEC medical staff. Rick quickly called the individual to apologize and discuss the complaint. The situation ended on a positive note, but it presaged a major challenge facing Rick and DHEC throughout the pandemic—how to keep the public informed while protecting the privacy of individuals as guaranteed by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). The governor's office, first responders, and the DHEC public health staff had different ideas about how to address this issue. Rick's leadership challenge was to find an acceptable middle ground that satisfied all stakeholders and the law.

The governor's staff and the press demanded more information, as did first responders—police and firefighters who might be called to a location where someone was infected with COVID-19. Emergency services personnel wanted DHEC to maintain a database of names and addresses of people who had tested positive for the virus. Public health and medical professionals on the DHEC staff refused to provide such information because doing so would violate the privacy considerations imposed by HIPAA. Furthermore, they reasoned that since the disease was no longer communicable after two weeks, it made no sense to keep private health information in a database. Rick needed to find a solution that would maintain the trust of all parties. DHEC agreed to provide a record of addresses where someone had tested positive, but without individual identifying information. This compromise worked. The medical staff believed they were not violating protected health

information, and the first responders felt that their concerns had been addressed. As the pandemic continued to spread, methods to share information continued to evolve.

DHEC and the governor's staff activated the state incident command team shortly after the first COVID-19 cases were discovered. In those early days, the team of twenty to thirty people met daily to share information, formulate plans for protecting public health, and address concerns of businesses, schools, and constituents. The meetings provided the governor with reliable information on which to base his televised briefings. The structure of the incident command team allowed for cross-functional coordination of the relevant staff agencies in the state. As the pandemic played out, the team provided the forum for continuous learning and adaptation to better respond to the complex and ever-changing environment brought on by the pandemic.

The incident command team had been activated in the past to respond to hurricanes, so many of the procedures to disseminate information and instructions were already in place. However, the pandemic presented new challenges such as masking and social distancing. When senior members of the incident command team, including Rick, gathered behind the governor for his early televised updates to the press and public, they followed protocols they had used in the past at hurricane briefings. After making preliminary remarks about the pandemic and the state's progress in combating the deadly virus, the governor called on the leaders of various agencies to provide detailed reports on the actions of their respective areas. Rick and the state's epidemiologist spoke for DHEC and addressed infection rates, hospitalizations, and recommended precautionary measures such as social distancing, mask wearing, and hand washing. Citizens were becoming increasingly frustrated with the pandemic precautions, and it was DHEC's job to motivate them to follow the prescribed guidelines. But there was an obvious symbolic problem, at least to those watching the briefing: the staff was crowded shoulder-to-shoulder behind the governor, and no one was wearing a mask. The governor and his public health leaders were not modeling their own guidance. Rick understood this situation as a potential breach of trust and a violation of his concern for maintaining DHEC's reputation. Based on Rick's advice, at subsequent press conferences fewer staff members attended, and all wore masks and followed social distancing protocols. This incident was a dramatic reminder of the symbolic role leaders play in setting the example. Nonverbal messages communicate important information in complex, politically charged environments.

As the pandemic raged on throughout the spring of 2020, the governor and DHEC were under enormous pressure to respond to competing demands. Mask wearing, although unpopular, had become commonplace, thanks in large measure to local ordinances passed by county and city governments. Businesses had established social-distancing procedures and set up hand-sanitizing stations. But the public wanted out of quarantine, restaurants were eager to reopen for indoor dining, and schools needed to restart in-person instruction. The public was feeling COVID-19 fatigue after only a few months, but the virus was still spreading; infections, hospitalizations, and mortality rates were expected to spike in

the summer. The DHEC public health staff were trying to protect the public from itself while fighting the disease, and were under pressure from the governor and elected politicians to open the economy and get life back to normal.

The political forces on the governor were enormous. Rick and his team felt the governor's distress, and they never wanted to be in a position of contradicting his decisions in public. To ensure all messages were consistent, Rick and his public health staff met with the governor or his communication team before each press conference to review talking points and identify potential points of friction. Rick and DHEC representatives always led with the scientific facts, but they were also aware that political expediency might override sound medical advice. As each issue presented, the DHEC team worked to balance the science with the political realities and made the governor and his staff aware of the public health concerns any action they made might affect. Through previously built trusting political relationships and artful negotiations with the governor's team, they discovered middle-ground solutions to address issues and relieve pressure on all parties. Rick knew that each day would bring new problems, and he needed to maintain DHEC's credibility for future, potentially more important, challenges. He did not want to invest all his reputational capital on one fight and not have the resources to negotiate others later. His negotiations were successful. On a few issues he came close to his line in the sand—when political expediency could have violated his professional ethics or resulted in significant danger to the public—but it was never crossed.

As positive tests, hospitalizations, and deaths mounted in the early months of the pandemic, the governor decided he needed a new narrative to shift the public's focus to a positive post-pandemic future for the state. His solution was "Accelerate South Carolina," an effort to consider economic revitalization in coordination with the COVID-19 incident command team's efforts to fight the virus. Five task forces would address issues related to combating the pandemic and opening the economy—response, protection, governance, resources, and information. DHEC provided support to the response task force, working on contact-tracing protocols, personal protective equipment supplies, and long-term mitigation strategies to eliminate the pandemic. Task force meetings were televised so the public would know that state agencies were working in concert to address the pandemic. Accelerate South Carolina successfully focused the press and the public on a positive future, which bought time for Rick and his team to ramp up public health strategies to combat the virus.

Throughout the pandemic, Rick tried to ensure that the public received a consistent set of guidelines supported by the evolving scientific understanding of the coronavirus. How did it work? Rick got a firsthand understanding of the impact of governmental decisions and policies from his wife, who was on the front line of the crisis.

On the Front Line of the Pandemic

Dr. M. Linda Hawes, Rick's wife, is a board-certified nephrologist who works as an internal medicine hospitalist at Beaufort Memorial Hospital in Beaufort, South Carolina. She earned

a medical degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and completed an internal medicine residency and nephrology fellowship at North Carolina Memorial Hospital. She was in private practice in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, for twenty-two years, then in 2008 transitioned to Beaufort after Rick became president and CEO of Beaufort Memorial Hospital. As a hospitalist, Linda serves as an attending physician and coordinates a team of healthcare providers. She was on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic and experienced the impact of national and state public health policies.

Hospital administrators and community officials in Beaufort did everything possible to follow DHEC and CDC guidance and provide the resources to mitigate the spread of the virus, but conflicting and often politicized messages about mask wearing and social distancing resulted in uneven public compliance with CDC guidelines. The increasing number of cases, which she believed could have been minimized or prevented had the scientifically validated public health considerations been embraced, added to the frustration and emotional stress Linda and her colleagues already felt in taking care of sick and dying patients. The contagious nature of the coronavirus precluded family and friends from visiting patients, adding to the emotional stress for patients and healthcare providers alike. Human touch, so important in medical care, was not possible. Linda and her team, following their values-based approach to medical care, eventually found ways to connect patients with their families through video conferencing. Although not the same as a tender hug, this approach helped combat patients' feeling of social isolation.

Most distressing for Linda were the life-and-death decisions she and others had to make with critically ill patients. She knew many of these cases might have been prevented if all those involved had complied with the consistent message about how to deal with the pandemic. She also realized that some patients would not survive despite heroic efforts by the medical team; yet family members, given conflicting information about the disease, refused to give up and let their loved ones go peacefully with support from the hospital's palliative care team. During this stressful period, Linda and her colleagues celebrated the recoveries and learned from the heartbreak of those who did not survive the deadly disease. While public policy was continually debated, constant support from family, friends, and community organizations helped ease the stress and sooth the frayed emotions of these frontline medical heroes.

Leadership Lessons for Public Health Executives

This case study illustrates how a public health executive facing the VUCA environment brought on by a dangerous global pandemic led his organization through the crisis and illuminates the impact high-level decisions can have on frontline health professionals. Five lessons of leadership emerge from this case.

1. Prepare the organization. Senior leaders prepare their organizations for the VUCA environment from the beginning; they do not wait for a crisis to arise. In many ways, this is the biggest lesson from the case study. DHEC succeeded in facing the coronavirus

pandemic because Rick had laid the groundwork before the crisis. Enacting the symbolic role of leadership, he helped employees make meaning in their work. He devoted the early months of his tenure to understanding and shaping the organization's culture by communicating a vision and a set of priorities, then reinforced those values in his interactions with employees. He also based executive decisions, such as those dealing with grievances, on DHEC's values to send a strong message about his priorities. From the human resource frame, he empowered leaders and employees at all levels to do their work, trusting them to bring the culture to life in serving all constituents. Structurally, he considered the organizational culture when making employment decisions. By waiting to fill the staff senior position until he understood the culture and could determine the attributes needed in potential candidates, he ensured a match between the organization and the individual. Finally, he created a learning organization that could adapt to the dynamic and complex environment that he faced. When the pandemic arrived in South Carolina, Rick had a trained and empowered workforce that was able to rapidly adjust to the evolving crisis and help make the best decisions possible.

2. Consider the impact of decisions on the public. Rick understood that policy decisions made at the national and state levels had a profound impact on the public. He was aware that health professionals at hospitals around the state had to respond to the guidelines issued at all levels of government. Inconsistent messages could result in illness and death, as Linda experienced daily with her patients. Notwithstanding confusing messages from the federal government and the politicization of such things as mask wearing, Rick did his best to ensure policies within the state were consistently communicated and reinforced at local levels.

3. Establish trusting relationships with stakeholders. Leading successfully in VUCA environments requires political acumen. Executive leaders must forge strong, trusting relationships with relevant stakeholders, and those must be established before and maintained during a crisis. Trusting relationships are built on mutual respect and values, open communications, cooperative interdependence, and a willingness to trust and empower others (see chapter 10 and the IROC model of trust). Rick demonstrated all these actions as he built strong relationships with DHEC stakeholders. From the outset of his tenure, Rick devoted much of his efforts to establishing open communications with the governor and his staff, legislators, regulated organizations, and the public. The Able fire was an early test for him, and DHEC's actions demonstrated cooperative interdependence in balancing the competing needs of stakeholders to achieve shared goals. He insisted that all DHEC employees protect the reputation of the organization by providing quality service to all constituents, and he reached out to stakeholders with a personal touch. Rick's efforts to build bridges beforehand allowed him and his staff to speak truth to power and to the public throughout the pandemic because they had the trust and confidence of constituents. His reputation gave him the credibility to negotiate successfully with competing stakeholders to solve problems for the public good.

4. Look for the common ground. Finding common ground is important for successful leadership in a VUCA environment. From the political frame, Rick understood that different stakeholders brought their own agendas and values to understanding and solving the pandemic. He tried to appreciate each perspective and find common ground that would yield the most benefit for all parties. When first responders demanded information about contagious households, Rick and his team worked out a solution that met their needs and still satisfied HIPAA requirements. The governor's desire to open the economy potentially rubbed against the science of public health guidelines, but Rick found ways to balance both concerns. He and Linda personally felt the stress that governmental decisions had on hospitals and medical staff. He mitigated those pressures by consistently recommending scientifically sound policies and distributing necessary resources. Rick also knew how far his team was willing to go to find common ground. Fortunately, these boundaries were never crossed.

5. Represent the organization through clear communications. Politically dynamic VUCA environments require leaders to create a shared understanding with all stakeholders through frequent and transparent communications. During the crisis, Rick spent 80 percent of his time on the pandemic and 20 percent of his time on the rest of DHEC's mission. This is an important lesson for senior leaders: during a crisis, your role is to manage the boundaries of your organization by influencing external stakeholders and communicating candidly with the public. Rick and DHEC used multiple modes to keep the public informed as the pandemic unfolded. He also learned that symbolism matters. Actions, such as masking and social distancing, say more than policy pronouncements. Senior leaders are symbols of their organizations; what they do as well as what they say influences the effectiveness of their message.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

While each case study contains lessons learned that are unique to the situation and profession described, commonalities also emerged that provide general guidance for leaders in any field who operate in complex and dynamic social and political environments.

1. Senior leaders in VUCA environments are most effective when they use all four frames of reference to guide their leadership actions. As the case studies demonstrate, combining the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames into a coherent plan of action results in organizational success. Particularly in politically charged situations, it is important for senior leaders to build and maintain trusting relationships with all stakeholders in advance of a crisis.
2. Similarly, a senior leader's primary responsibility is to shape the organizational culture before a crisis arises. Organizational cultures that value learning and employee empowerment are in the best position to meet the challenges of a VUCA environment.

3. When a crisis does arise, senior leaders must represent the organization to internal and external stakeholders through clear, frequent, and transparent communications. Senior leaders must also be present at the critical place and time during the crisis.

NOTES

1. L. G. Bolman and T. E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).
2. E. H. Schein, *Organizational Leadership and Culture* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986).
3. Ed was hired (appointed), although the vast majority of communities in the Northeast rely on strict civil service rules to select replacements. Under civil service, those deemed eligible for a vacant position take a test and, after applying bonus points for special considerations like military service and/or handicaps, the person with the highest score gets the job regardless of the candidate's job qualifications.
4. South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, data retrieved from https://scdhec.gov/about-dhec/about-us, February 27, 2021.

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CHAPTER 20

Tactical and Operational Decision Making and Planning

SEAN T. HANNAH, JOHN VERMEESCH, DAVID C. SUNDBERG, AND CHRISTOPHER M. SMITH

DECISION MAKING IS A FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENT of leadership. In the Army, leaders attempt to gain the situational understanding necessary for good decision making by first fully assessing their own team, the terrain/environment, and the enemy/threat/competition. Effective planning is key to gaining and then using that situational understanding. This chapter provides an overview of key elements of a time-tested U.S. Army planning process that can be successfully applied to other types of organizations operating in dangerous contexts: the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP). The U.S. military operates in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) contexts. Over the course of many years the Army has created and honed the MDMP as a standardized decision-making process to employ in such contexts to ensure thorough assessment and planning. Ultimately, that process supports leaders' ability to make effective and timely decisions.

Having a standardized decision-making process like the MDMP in place offers many benefits to an organization. First, if all organizational leaders know the same standardized process and it is used at all levels of the organization, leaders can communicate during planning using the same terms, language, and procedures. Second, leaders can be reassigned across the organization or units can be paired with other units as needed. Third, and most important, a structured decision-making process such as the MDMP ensures that a thorough analysis is conducted and no planning steps are missed. Planners achieve situational awareness and understanding of their operating context, build a clear and shared understanding up and down organizational hierarchies as to what the mission and leader's intent are, develop an effective set of courses of action (COAs), select the most effective COA, and identify and build contingency plans.

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower famously said, "Plans are nothing, planning is everything." Eisenhower meant that your final plan is less important than the synergies and knowledge

gained from the rich planning process that you went through to create it. It is the planning *process* that provides the needed wisdom about your mission and operating context. The process forces creativity and ideation about multiple COAs and provides you with contingencies that enhance your adaptability. The latter is critical because, as nineteenth-century Prussian field marshal Helmuth von Moltke noted, "no operation plan extends with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the main body of the enemy. It is only the layman who, as a campaign develops, thinks he sees the original plan being systematically fulfilled in every detail to its preconceived conclusion." In short, no plan survives contact with the enemy. The situation can change, your resources or capabilities change, and different actors take steps that force you to change your COA in response; a properly executed MDMP process sets the conditions for leaders to address these contingencies. Thus, in going through the MDMP process, leaders gain a better perspective of themselves, the environment, their mission requirements, and the competition/challenges and opportunities they face. This perspective provides clarity and flexibility to adapt their plans to such changes.

OVERVIEW OF THE MILITARY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

In this chapter we outline the seven core steps of the MDMP and its various substeps, which may or may not be applicable based on the level of complexity of the task or mission (see figure 20.1 and appendix A). Readers who want to see a more elaborate description of the full MDMP can consult the numerous open-source military doctrinal publications available.[1] The Army uses this same general planning process whether it is preparing to conduct an assault, a ceremonial parade, or a major training exercise. The MDMP is a standardized and methodical decision-making process that can be abbreviated and tailored to the mission at hand. Some parts of the MDMP can be delegated to others who create the relevant products and analyses to then present to you for approval and guidance. For example, an intelligence cell may be tasked to create parts of the mission analysis (Step 2), such as assessment of the operating context, enemy/adversaries, and other key actors.

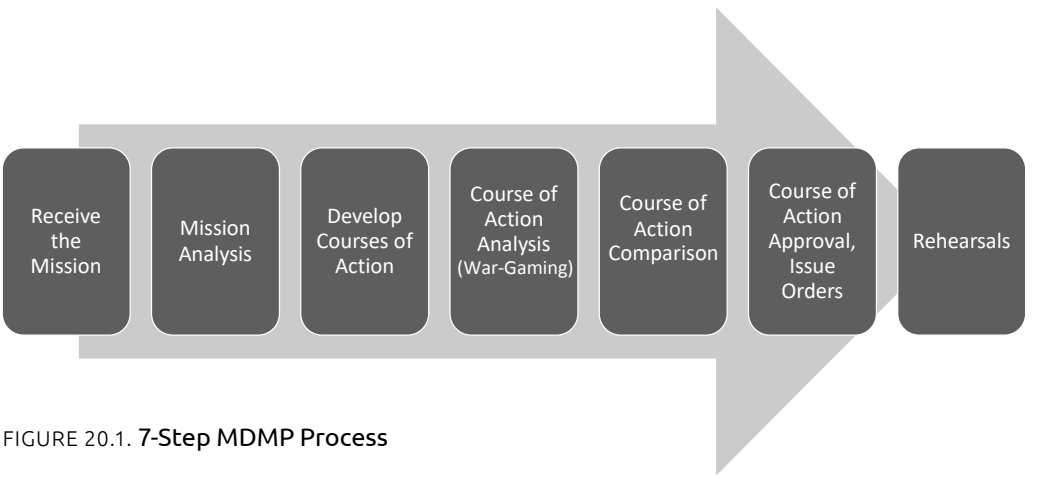

FIGURE 20.1. 7-Step MDMP Process

Step 1: Receipt of the Mission

Step 1 entails three actions. The first involves receiving a mission, task, or directive from whoever has tasking authority over your organization/team, and then reviewing that mission and the intent of the leader who issued the mission to ensure that you understand what you are being asked to do. At a minimum you should be completely clear about the issuing leader's intent including (a) what the vision/desired end state is that you must achieve, (b) what the key/priority tasks are that need to be completed to achieve that end state, and (c) what the ultimate purpose of the mission is; as well the levels of resources available to use, and any constraints that must be adhered to (see chapter 14 for more on leader's intent). It is wise in Step 1 to provide a confirmation brief back to the leader who issued the mission, to ensure full understanding and alignment and ask any questions. You do not want to move forward into MDMP Step 2 and spend your time, energy, and resources planning for a mission without first having full understanding of that mission and the leader's intent. If you or someone on your team created the mission, then this step just requires that you issue a clear mission and intent to whoever is conducting the planning for you.

The second action in Step 1 is to establish a clear planning and preparation timeline that identifies key milestones between the present time and the start of mission execution. The military uses *backward planning* to create a timeline that allocates time to each phase of planning and preparation that needs to be accomplished prior to mission launch/start. Table 20.1 is an example of the backward planning technique. As time is typically limited, the backward planning timeline entails prioritization regarding how much time will be allocated for planning.

If within your plan you are assigning tasks/missions to your subordinate units/organizations, it is critical that they also conduct the MDMP at their level, tailored to their part of the mission. As such, you must allocate them enough time to do their own analysis and planning. In table 20.1, for example, the headquarters creating the plan issues that plan and

TABLE 20.1
Example of Backward Planning Timeline

Event/Milestone	*Time*
Mission start (S)	S = 2300 hours Zulu 20 May 2021
Stage the team for execution	S – 2 hours
Final preparation	S – 1 day
Full rehearsal	S – 3 days
Training	S – 6 days
Issue plan/operations orders/instructions	S – 10 days
COA Approval	S – 11 days
Start MDMP (begin Mission Analysis)	S – 14 days

assigns missions to subordinate units ten days prior to mission start time, and gives those units seven days to conduct planning at their level until they have to come back and conduct the rehearsal at Start minus 3 days. U.S. Army doctrine is to take no more than one-third of available time at your own level for planning, thus leaving two-thirds of the time for lower-level units or whoever else (e.g., interagency partners) you are delegating a task to.

In the third and final step in Step 1 the leader issues planning guidance (if any) to the planning team if the leader has one and is not managing the detailed planning process him/herself. Such guidance might include when the leader wants to receive planning updates, receive decision briefings on planning products, or identify any components to be included or excluded from the plans (e.g., "I want any COA developed to include the following interagency partners . . ." or "ensure no COA allocates more than X fire battalions").

Step 2: Mission Analysis

A thorough mission analysis is crucial to planning. Both the process and the products of mission analysis help leaders refine their understanding of the situation and the operating environment, and fully determine the requirements of their mission. Accurate situational understanding helps better visualize the operational context, competitive landscape, and all other stakeholders who are affected by or can influence the plan or its execution. Ultimately, in Step 2 you want to achieve the wisdom you will need to develop effective COAs in Step 3. Mission analysis consists of seven substeps (see table 20.2), which are not necessarily conducted sequentially. Ultimately, mission analysis helps us ensure we are solving the right problem, and fully understand the problem we are solving.

Substep 1: Analyze the mission and leader intent. In mission analysis you go beyond the confirmation of the mission and the leader's intent you conducted in Step 1 and further unpack both of those. You will identify any constraints placed upon you (things you must do, things you are not allowed to do, resource levels you cannot exceed, risk

TABLE 20.2
Seven Substeps to Mission Analysis

1. Analyze the mission and leader's intent issued from higher headquarters.
2. Determine specified, implied, and key/essential tasks.
3. Conduct METT-TC analysis (METT-TC: mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, and civil considerations).
4. Determine/refine constraints.
5. Identify critical facts and assumptions.
6. Perform risk assessment.
7. Develop and distribute the initial leader's guidance and warning order.

parameters established, etc.) that must be accounted for in your planning (appendix A, STEP 2: substep 1).

Substep 2: Determine tasks. This guidance from leadership should consist of specified tasks, implied tasks, and key tasks that you must explicitly identify. The specified tasks are those directly stated within the guidance that you must perform. The implied tasks are those you must also accomplish in order to accomplish the specified tasks. A specified task, for example, would be to arrive at the site of a building fire within your area of operations not later than (NLT) fifteen minutes from notification; implied tasks would include making sure that vehicles are kept topped off with fuel and that you have a certain percentage of your available firefighters ready to respond at any time. Key tasks are those which, although not explicitly stated by your leader, must be accomplished in order to accomplish the overall intent of the leader.

Substep 3: Conduct METT-TC analysis (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, and civil considerations).

Mission. Determine specified, implied, and key tasks. Specified *tasks* are tasks that higher headquarters explicitly assigns to your team. *Implied tasks* are additional tasks that your team must perform to accomplish each specified task although the higher headquarters' order/instructions do not explicitly state them. For example, if a specified task given to a SWAT team is to implement a new set of building entry procedures, that may infer a series of implied tasks (e.g., reserve the training site to practice the new procedures, conduct training of operators on the new procedures, and certify proficiency) that must be completed to execute that specified task.

Among your specified and implied tasks are some that *must* be executed effectively if you are to accomplish the mission. These are called *key tasks***.** While many other tasks may be important, key tasks if executed poorly will likely result in mission failure. Higher headquarters may explicitly state the tasks it considers to be key tasks, but you may determine that other implied tasks are also key tasks because you will not achieve the vision/end state if they are not done. (Note: not all tasks can be key/essential tasks—"key" is meant to create priorities.) All COAs you develop should be designed to accomplish all key tasks.

Enemy. Not all plans have an "enemy" per se, but most do have some form of adversaries or forces that your plan must operate against (e.g., rioters, criminal elements, a competitor organization, etc.) or that may be hostile to your plan. If not, then forgo this part of the analysis. In this analysis, you want to fully understand all adversaries/adversarial forces. One approach is to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the internal and external environments (see figure 20.2 for SWOT matrix) to better understand those adversaries and their capabilities and limitations. You will also want to analyze and understand their intentions, motives, structure, leadership, and so on. This step allows you to accurately see and understand the enemy/competition.

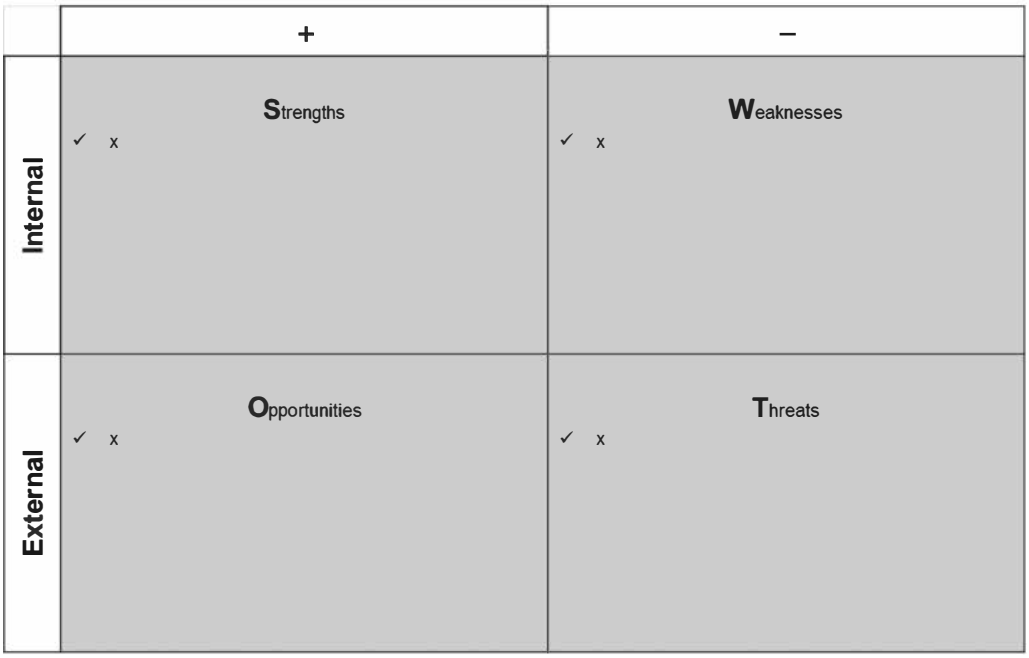

FIGURE 20.2. SWOT Matrix

Terrain and weather. Assess the terrain and, if relevant, the weather in which the mission will be conducted. Terrain might be physical terrain, such the topography of an area and locations of water sources for a wildland fire team; the layout of a building and ingress and egress points for a SWAT team; the best concealment and fields of fire for a sniper team; or the building construction and types of building materials in a set of warehouses for a firefighter. Another example might be an interagency planning team understanding parade routes and traffic control points for a special event. Yet "terrain" should also include the assessment of other environmental factors such as the weather you must operate in. Terrain also includes "human terrain," including social, psychological, or political factors such as the attitudes or allegiances of the populace you must operate with, the culture you will operate in, or the political tensions that will influence the mission.

Among the terrain factors will be the "key terrain" that you must seize, control, or deny adversaries control over to be successful in achieving the leader's intent. In a counter-riot operation, for example, the key terrain may be not letting rioters north of Market Street, not losing the support of certain local political leaders, or not allowing rioters to occupy a certain municipal building. For a firefighting unit, key terrain might be certain key buildings or highly combustible areas to protect, or protecting certain power sources needed for operations. The COAs you develop must then account for seizing, controlling, or denying key terrain. This part of the process enables you to accurately see the terrain/environment so you can later craft COAs that can be successful in the conditions that exist.

Troops. This part of the METT-TC analysis includes examining the capabilities, capacities, and core competencies of your team/organization and the resources available to apply to the mission, as well as the resources of your stakeholders and partners on which you can potentially draw as you create COAs. Again, a SWOT matrix may be useful to assess your team and partners in this way. For example, a police force getting ready to provide security for a major event should have a clear understanding of the capabilities and resources available to them both within and outside their department. This is the part of the process where you gain the necessary situational understanding to accurately see yourself and your capabilities. Through the "troops" assessment you seek to identify any gaps in manpower, expertise, technology, equipment, or other assets that need to be acquired in order to accomplish the mission and leader's intent and all specified, implied, and key tasks effectively.

Time. Factors related to time may include when you expect key events to occur; when other parties, whether friendly or adversary, are expected to make critical decisions or take actions; and any "not earlier than" (NET) or "not later than" (NLT) parameters, such as the earliest or latest time a mission can be launched, the earliest or latest time a key partner will be able to accomplish their part of the mission, or the earliest or latest time that certain needed resources will be available.

Civil. Civil considerations that your plan must account for might include the regulatory and legal environments of the culture you are operating in. You must also assess any relevant political factors and policies, laws, norms, and customs that your COAs must account for.

From the METT-TC analysis, also determine if you have the assets needed to perform all specified and implied tasks within the context you illuminated in your METT-TC analysis. If shortages are found, identify the additional resources needed to succeed and request those from your higher headquarters or adjacent organizations.

The basis of the METT-TC analysis can be conducted through an Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB).[2] The IPB is a process for getting all appropriate information on personnel issues; enemy/adversary/threat or dangerous situation information; and friendly information to include your and your task force (if any) number and readiness status of personnel, vehicles, equipment, logistics, and communication. Depending upon the level of the organization where the mission analysis is being completed, there may be staff sections responsible for this information; if not, planners need to gather the above information to the best of their ability in order to build the METT-TC analysis. Additionally, the IPB should assign people or staff responsibility to update the information they are responsible for throughout the planning process and the actual operation.

Substep 4: Determine/refine constraints. Higher-level leaders often place some constraints, or limits, on subordinate leaders' freedom of action. Those may have been determined in MDMP Step 1 above. However, your METT-TC analyses may have uncovered additional

constraints not issued from higher levels, such as those stemming from resource or capability limitations. Again, constraints can take the form of a requirement that certain things/components/aspects must be included as part of any COA you develop or that you are prohibited from including in any COA—*must dos* and *can't dos*. For example, the police force securing an event in its town may discover that the mayor has directed limited police presence within a certain distance of the event (*can't do*) but has also dictated that DUI check points be established on the highway leading into town (*must do*).

Substep 5: Identify critical facts and assumptions. Former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld once said that in any planning "there are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we don't know we don't know." In any plan, it is critical to list facts—things we know we know. Facts are statements of known information relevant to the plan. Yet all plans are conducted with limited information. Thus, it is critical to list the things we know we don't know and then make reasonable assumptions to use during planning. Assumptions are suppositions in the absence of facts about the current or future situation that are required to continue planning. They take the place of necessary, but unavailable, facts and fill the gaps in what you know about a situation, allowing you to continue planning. We may know that we don't know how many demonstrators will show up at a protest, for example, but we can make reasonable assumptions for use in planning. We may even make appropriate additional assumptions about the possibility that demonstrations could evolve into rioting. Assumptions should be continually revisited and challenged during later steps of the MDMP, however, as described below. Many of these facts and needed assumptions will have already been raised during the METT-TC analysis. We will cover addressing the unknown unknowns in Step 4 of the MDMP (war-gaming) described below.

Substep 6: Perform risk assessment. Identify potential risk hazards, to include those highlighted as threats in your METT-TC analysis (such as in the SWOT analysis) and make an initial assessment of the risk level for each hazard. Ensure that legal, ethical, and regulatory considerations are included, and assess how the mission may align with or influence organizational values and principles. The assumptions you listed in substep 5 will help with risk mitigation by identifying things that need to be followed up on later and confirmed once the information is known. By listing the assumptions in the risk assessment, we can consider possible mitigating plans based on the best- and worst-case options that might occur if our assumptions are correct.

Substep 7: Develop and distribute the initial leader's guidance and warning order. After reviewing the products from the mission analysis substeps listed above, craft and distribute three things to your own team/subordinate teams so that they can begin to

anticipate and conduct parallel planning for their part of the mission, conducting their own MDMP:

- Issue a *mission statement*. Include why, who, what, when, and where. An example mission statement is shown in appendix B.
- Issue your own *leader intent statement*. The leader's intent is a clear, concise statement of why the mission is being conducted (purpose), the desired end state (vision) to be achieved (what success looks like), and what the unit must absolutely do to succeed (key tasks). It is essentially the leader's "word picture" to visualize their intent for the team. Your intent statement should be tailored to your team but be compatible with the one you received from higher headquarters. It will serve as the focus for developing potential courses of action in the next step. The mission and the leader's intent statements should be written clearly and concisely so that organizations two echelons down can understand them. The leader's intent statement should also emphasize what you want the team to achieve but avoid telling them how to do it. This will allow subordinate leaders and organizations the greatest flexibility, creativity, and ownership in creating their supporting plans. There can be some confusion about the difference between the mission statement and the leader's intent because they seem similar. The main difference is that the mission statement essentially contains answers to the five Ws (who, what, when, where, and why) of the mission, while the leader's intent provides a deeper explanation, direct from the leader directing the mission, on what they see as the purpose of the mission, what they see as being the most important tasks (among the many tasks that must be done), and what they see as the ultimate end state to be achieved, describing all relevant conditions on what the battlefield or area of operations should look like at the conclusion of the operation. Appendix B shows an example of a leader's intent statement.
- Issue a *warning order* to your team. Before proceeding further in planning, send subordinate and supporting/partner organizations a "warning order" with the basic information from the mission analysis step (such as the METT-TC products; specified, implied, and key task lists; list of assumptions; revised mission statement; leader's intent statement) so they can begin to anticipate what they may be asked to do and have the situational awareness and intelligence needed to do some preliminary parallel planning while you and your planning team continue planning at your level of the organization. Importantly, in dangerous contexts, operations are often conducted under extreme time compression. Thus, parallel planning is critical, and transparently providing subordinate units with information as it emerges is paramount. The warning order does not need to be the only information push—planners should feed information as able to subordinate and adjacent units throughout the entire planning process. Similarly, planners should seek information and advice from subordinate and adjacent units to inform the

planning process because they may have insights or information that the planning team lacks. When the situation allows, a best practice is for the planners to conduct a mission analysis briefing attended by all units participating in the mission, where they can ask questions and give input before the planners start to develop courses of action (Step 3 below).

Step 3: Develop Courses of Action

Now that you are armed with the wisdom gained in Steps 1 and 2 of the MDMP, the next step is to develop two or more courses of action, each of which could reasonably accomplish the mission, for analysis and comparison. At least two COAs are needed so that they can be compared for their relative strengths and weaknesses. The mission statement and leader's intent should provide the basic five Ws to inform COA development; and the specified, implied, and key tasks, facts and assumptions, constraints, risk factors, and other products from the METT-TC analysis provide the situational awareness needed information to create effective COAs. Each COA must meet five criteria:

- *Suitability*—each must adequately accomplish the mission and comply with the leader's intent and any constraints or other planning guidance received.
- *Feasibility*—you must have the time, space, resources, and other capabilities to accomplish the COA effectively.
- *Acceptability*—what is to be gained from the COA must justify the cost in resources and risks.
- *Distinguishability*—each COA you develop must differ significantly from any others and not just be slightly different versions of the same COA. Having distinguishable COAs forces broad thinking about divergent possibilities and ensures that meaningfully different COAs can be meaningfully compared in MDMP Step 4.
- *Completeness*—each COA must be complete as far as outlining the steps/elements of the plan from start to end of the operation.

Substep 1: Generate COA options. Based on (a) the mission and leader's intent and (b) the results of Step 2 (mission analysis), the planning staff generates potential COAs meeting the five criteria listed above. Numerous COAs (at least two) should be created as time allows. Creativity and "outside the box" thinking are critical in this phase; forcing yourself to create at least two distinguishable COAs forces this creativity and gives the decision maker divergent options to choose from. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if COAs are different enough from each other to be truly distinguishable. In the Army, a general rule of thumb is that each COA should have a different "center of gravity." The center of gravity "is the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act."[3] Center of gravity can also be thought of as the core factor that mission success will revolve around.

Examples of different COAs for an Army unit might involve whether to attack or defend; for a wildland firefighter unit whether to send smoke jumpers into the blaze or mass firefighters on the perimeter to contain the fire instead; for a hostage rescue team whether to enter on the ground level or conduct a heliborne assault and enter from the roof downward; for a law enforcement team whether to issue an arrest warrant at a perpetrator's home or place of business; for a law enforcement unit whether to disperse protesters or allow them to occupy part of a city and then contain their expansion. Creating such distinguishable COAs allows each to be deeply analyzed for their respective strengths and weaknesses in Step 4, below.

Substep 2: Develop the concept of operations for each COA. The concept of operations is an overall description outlining a particular COA from start to finish. It covers the five Ws (who does what, when, where, and why). Each concept of operation should include a task organization—what organizational structure is needed, what tasks are assigned to each unit or person, what are the lines of authority, and who reports to whom. This includes identifying for each plan which unit(s) has priority as the main effort and which are in support. COA descriptions can be written in paragraph text, in matrix format, in visual schematics, or some combination of all three (see Appendix C for a sample COA synchronization matrix).

Step 4: Course of Action Analysis (War-Gaming)

COA analysis (war-gaming) is a critical and disciplined process. Beyond mission analysis, which ensures we understand and are solving the right problem, war-gaming allows us to see the strengths and weaknesses of our potential COAs so that we can ensure we have a high probability of solving that problem effectively and efficiently. It includes deliberately walking through each COA step by step, from start to finish, to refine the COA and identify its strengths and weaknesses, challenging the plan with "what if" scenarios at every turn. It is a recurring process of action, reaction, and counteraction. Often called Red Teaming (discussed in greater detail in chapter 21), war-gaming stimulates ideas, highlights critical tasks, and provides insights that planners otherwise might miss. Because war-gaming is a crucial step in the MDMP, leaders should allocate significant time to it—perhaps more than any other planning step. If time is compressed, at a minimum war-game the most likely and most dangerous contingencies that may occur.

1. Determine evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria are the factors you will use to measure the relative effectiveness and efficiency of one COA relative to other COAs following the war-gaming (in MDMP Step 5). Evaluation criteria may include anything you want to specify, such as how well a COA will limit spread of the fire, protect critical assets, limit civil disruption, impose risk to civilians, uphold organizational values, or avoid the chance of litigation. To maintain objectivity, it is critical to establish the criteria you will evaluate all COAs against up front before war-gaming, as doing so after COAs are wargamed can result in you creating, either intentionally or through implicit biases, criteria after the fact that justify the COA that the group likes subjectively.

2. Set the conditions. It is also critical that you properly set the climate in the team to allow effective war-gaming. This entails establishing a transparent culture of trust and respect that encourages everyone to ideate outside the box and "speak truth to power" by openly expressing their thoughts and concerns about plans. Everyone needs to remain objective, not allowing personality, level of authority, or their belief of "what the leader wants" to limit ideation. It is critical to avoid defending a COA just because you developed it. Likewise, there should also be "no rank in the room"; everyone participates and has a chance to raise ideas, issues, and concerns transparently. In addition, all data inputs to the war game, like capabilities of the friendly or enemy (if one exists) forces or understanding of basic terrain such as accessible streets or public/private land, must be verified and continually updated through the IPB process mentioned earlier. Any assumptions of capabilities must be explicitly noted; for example, "we assume they have at most ten hostages and are likely to take violent action if pushed." These written assumptions are useful because as the situation develops, information may come to light that causes you to either verify or refute the assumptions, which might change planning.

3. Assign the adjudicator. During the war game, it may be wise to assign an adjudicator to serve as "referee." The adjudicator will make calls when friendly and enemy forces, threats, or adverse conditions collide. For example, if a "player" in the war game says he or she would "shift three firefighter companies to sector B if the fire shifts north," the adjudicator might challenge whether those assets would be sufficient to hold the blaze. Based on the assumptions of friendly and enemy capabilities, the adjudicator thus makes the calls on whether friendly actions taken would be successful or not (or how successful). The adjudicator should be someone with knowledge of the operations planned and senior enough to be taken seriously, but should not be on the planning staff or have an obvious preference for one COA over another.

Effective war-gaming also requires balance. Planning teams often focus on the potential threats to the plan, but you should be looking to identify opportunities that may emerge during the plan's execution. You should ask yourself "how can we be ready to seize this opportunity if it presents itself" and create corresponding contingency plans for those opportunities, along with contingency plans for the potential threats.

Finally, well-resourced organizations may have the manpower to create a standing Red Team to war-game their plans. Such a designated team can be trained on advanced war-gaming techniques, such as those outlined in the U.S. Army's *Red Team Handbook*.[4] Standing Red Teams may bring greater objectivity to plans that they did not create. Although most organizations do not have the resources for standing Red Teams, that should not deter them from creating ad-hoc Red Teams or having the planning team conduct their own war-gaming.

4. Conduct effective war game. There are numerous methods and techniques for war-gaming—many more than we can cover here. We refer interested readers to chapters 14 and 21 of this book and to other works that outline the process much more fully.[5] One

approach to war-gaming would be to conduct the steps outlined below. Ensure that you war-game each COA separately. Do not try to compare or contrast different COAs during this step. That comparison occurs later in Step 5 (COA comparison) once the strengths and weaknesses of each are illuminated. If you don't keep the war games separate, the different COAs will begin to lose their distinguishability.

War-gaming is best done by breaking a plan into logical phases and then gaming one phase at a time. Thus, structure the session to walk participants through each phase in turn from start to finish of execution of the COA. Prepare synchronization matrices, schematics, models, or other products to guide conduct of the session and give participants a sense of sequence, space, and time. An effective war-gaming session might involve the following steps.

Conduct a stakeholder audit. Conduct a thorough analysis to identify all internal and external stakeholders that your plan will affect and/or who could affect implementation of your plan (e.g., adversaries, your interagency partners, government actors, regulators, community members, your own organization members). When possible, assign knowledgeable individuals to role-play those stakeholders to ensure all stakeholder perspectives and potential actions are represented and addressed.

Conduct stakeholder analysis. Walk through each phase of execution in turn, assessing the potential actions and reactions of each stakeholder group. In each execution phase, ask questions such as "What will be the desires, needs, fears, and positions of each stakeholder in this phase of the plan?" "What actions might they take or fail to take that could positively or negatively affect the plan?" "What threats and/or opportunities might they impose?"

Conduct Murphy's Law and Yhprum's Law analyses. After analyzing all stakeholders in a given phase, before moving to the next phase look for other *what ifs* that may occur in addition to specific stakeholder actions. Identify potential Murphy's Law ("if it can go wrong, it will go wrong") events. Yet in each phase also conduct Yhprum's Law ("Murphy" spelled backward) analysis, whereby you consider "anything that can go right, will go right." In this case, look for potential opportunities that may arise. As part of this analysis, challenge all the facts, assumptions, and hypotheses you generated during planning. Ask yourself: Are these really facts (known knowns) or just assumptions? What if the assumptions we made concerning the known unknowns are wrong? Have we adequately brainstormed potential unknown unknowns that might occur?

Identify and list known critical events, and decision points. The previous four steps of war-gaming will identify a series of critical events that will or could occur that could positively or negatively influence mission accomplishment, whether by stakeholders, natural events, or some other factor. In this fourth step, list and describe each critical event, then for those deemed to have sufficient probability of occurring, and are of sufficient importance, identify them as key decision points—points at which the leader may have to decide whether to launch a contingency plan, alter the strategy, abort the plan, allocate additional resources, and so on. Decision points are events, locations, or points in time

where important decisions may be required during mission execution due to one or more critical events occurring.

5. Create leader's critical information requirements. You should create leader's critical information requirements (LCIRs) for each critical event or decision point. An LCIR is simply an explicit list of what information the leader/decision maker needs to have reported to them so that they have (a) early warning that a critical event/decision point is impending, and (b) the information needed to make appropriate decisions about how to address the event, such as whether to launch a contingency plan. When you identify critical events, identify observable events leading up to them; for example, a fire may weaken the building's integrity and ability to support the weight of firefighter crews, potentially requiring the leader to redirect the plan. A leader may in that case issue LCIRs to report sagging wooden floors or plaster sliding off the walls as evidence of that critical event possibly happening. Additionally, if necessary, specific operators might be tasked to specific locations to look for indicators of critical events. In the same vein, decision points need to be supported by critical information. After identifying the decision points, leaders should tell subordinates what critical information should be reported to them during execution that will be used to drive decision making at the leader's level. In a hostage rescue operation, for example, that might be things like (a) assault team in place, (b) sniper teams in place, (c) building has been breached, (d) hostages secured, (e) hostages back at rally point, and (f) all teams exfiltrated. Similarly, the leader may also issue an LCIR for possible critical events during that operation, such as (a) death or injury to a hostage, (b) death or injury to a team member, or (c) indicators of the subjects surrendering. It is often useful to issue the LCIR in a matrix format describing each potential decision point (identified during war-gaming) and listing the associated LCIR needed to inform each key decision, such as to abort a mission or launch a contingency plan, as shown in Appendix D.

In sum, the process of identifying critical events, decision points, and associated leader critical information requirements forces the leader and planners to forecast and prepare for the future in complex operations and ensures the leader has proactively thought through the decisions he/she may have to make under pressure and what information is needed to make those decisions. Creating LCIRs also reduces the information burden on the leader, as followers know what the leader wants to know during execution to make decisions and can retain less important information at their respective level. This also enforces empowerment, as more senior leaders stay out of the "weeds" and entrust lower-level leaders to monitor and react to information that applies to decisions at their lower level.

6. Create contingency plans. Create a contingency plan for each decision point. The leader decides the number and depth of contingency plans based on factors such as how much time the team can allocate to planning, how likely each critical event is to occur, and how dangerous or opportune each possible key event might be.

7. Refine the COA. Much wisdom is gained during war-gaming. Thus, seek not only to identify contingencies to the COA but also to refine the COA itself to make it the best

it can be. Take time if available to refine the products you created in earlier parts of the MDMP based on the wisdom gained. This may include refining the specified, implied, and key tasks for the plan; the facts and assumptions; SWOT analyses; constraints and risks; resource requirements; event timing; assignments to suborganizations, et cetera.

Once you have thoroughly war-gamed and refined the first COA, do the same for your others. Remember that at least two COAs should be developed for any potential mission and improved through this war-gaming process to provide the senior leader with at least two distinct COAs to choose from.

Step 5: Course of Action Comparison

In the COA comparison step of the MDMP the planning team analyzes and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of each COA using the evaluation criteria developed at the beginning of Step 4. Again, this should be the first point at which you are comparing the merits of each COA against other COAs, having made each the best it can be in isolation through the earlier steps of the MDMP. At this point you can add additional criteria that you may have thought of during the war-gaming exercise (e.g., something you discovered that will be essential for any COA you select); but be very careful not to add criteria that are intended merely to justify a favored COA. The group then compares each feasible course of action against the others relative to the criteria to identify the COA that best meets the criteria. A matrix is useful for this comparison, and as not all criteria are equally important, each criterion should be weighted. Appendix E is a sample COA comparison matrix.

Step 6: COA Approval, Issue Orders

After completing the comparison, the leader selects a preferred COA. It is not uncommon for a leader to direct some final alterations to the COA he/she selects, or take some of the best features of another COA and merge those features into the selected COA. You then begin the process of writing and issuing the formal plan and orders to subordinate and/or partner teams that conveys to them all information/knowledge compiled from the full MDMP process. These other teams have already been doing some parallel planning based on the draft mission, leader's intent, warning order, and other planning information you should have been feeding them throughout the process. You are now giving them refined and finalized products and the "rest of the story" with greater details and guidance. Provide them also with products you developed that are applicable to their part of the mission, such as METT-TC analysis, lists of facts and assumptions, and so on. Remember to give others ample planning time before execution begins, if possible, so they can do a similar MDMP at their level for their part of the mission.

Refine and publish list/matrix of leader's critical information requirements. The LCIR needs to go out to the appropriate staff and operators so that during the operation they know to gather and report the required information. The LCIR may not seem important

to the operator during a particularly kinetic phase of the operation, but making sure operators and staff are aware of the purpose of each critical information requirement and how LCIRs inform decision making beforehand motivates them to note and report LCIRs rather than higher staffs having to continually "pull" information.

Step 7: Rehearsals

If time allows, rehearse all the actions directed within each of the stages/phases of the chosen COA. The COA synchronization matrix described earlier can be used to drive the rehearsal because it specifies what actions occur when, by whom, and other critical information. All key/essential tasks should be rehearsed, along with all actions leading up to the essential tasks in the planning. During the rehearsals, operators might find additional critical events or decision points planners failed to recognize in the earlier war-gaming process. This will lead to developing additional contingency plans that might involve deviating from the written plan, but while still accomplishing the leader's intent. As an example, when a major event is being planned in Washington, DC, such as the State of the Union Address or a presidential inauguration, the leaders of every planning subcommittee come together for a formal Rehearsal of Concept (ROC) drill and a tabletop exercise facilitated by an experienced crisis management professional from outside the planning teams. During this exercise, leaders walk through the most likely and most dangerous contingencies, and all participants gain a better understanding of the plan and can point out previously unseen conflicts between individual components.

It is important that all units/organizations that have responsibilities in executing the COA participate in the rehearsal. This is particularly true when you are operating with outside units, such as joint task forces or interagency partnerships. The rehearsal ensures synchronization between all units, identifies conflicts or redundancies, and confirms that the resources are properly allocated across units to ensure each part of the plan can be feasibly executed.

Much as you war-gamed the COA phase by phase, it should also be rehearsed phase by phase to ensure all parts of the plan are covered. Use map boards, terrain models, or other graphics so that everyone can visualize the unfolding plan and, if applicable, the terrain it will be executed in.

ABBREVIATING THE MDMP

The full seven-step MDMP outlined in this chapter is elaborate and can be time-consuming if completed in full. Remember that in Step 1 you created a backward planning timeline to determine how much of the available time prior to having to execute the plan you will allocate to the MDMP steps. That is a key decision for leaders. In the U.S. Army one often hears "go slow to go fast." The message is that it is often worth allocating the time for effective planning up front because it allows you to then execute

more swiftly and effectively, avoid mistakes and associated delays, operate with foresight and wisdom, and quickly shift to contingency plans as needed. Yet even in the Army, mission demands and time compression often require that the MDMP planning steps be abbreviated or accelerated. Further, simpler or lower-risk tasks do not all require a full MDMP. We noted above that in Step 1 the leader issues planning guidance directing what parts of the MDMP need to be performed, how many COAs they want developed, and other guidance on how abbreviated or elaborate the process should be.

CONCLUSION

The MDMP provides a standardized and disciplined process to support leaders' ability to make effective and timely decisions by allowing them to achieve situational awareness and shared understanding. By accurately seeing and understanding themselves, the environment/terrain, and the enemy/competition, and by creating well-thought-out and critically war-gamed COAs, leaders can create a solid plan with common language that serves as a jumping-off point from which to adapt when the conditions change, as inevitably they will. Anyone who has ever been part of a high-consequence operation knows it did not go exactly as planned. But having a plan based on a disciplined system like the MDMP allows for adaptability because, as General Eisenhower reminded us, "Plans are nothing, but planning is everything." In essence, gaining wisdom through the MDMP enhances adaptability.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Dangerous contexts are inherently volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA), and as such demand thorough planning and preparation.
2. A standardized planning process such as the MDMP outlined in Appendix A can be taught and institutionalized to provide common language and frameworks for effective planning, ensuring that planning is rigorous, thorough, and complete.
3. The MDMP ensures not only that an effective plan is created, but that planners challenge their own thinking and war-game possible weaknesses and needed contingencies for their plans.
4. The MDMP can be abbreviated as needed, based on the timeline created in backward planning.
5. Plans need to be fully rehearsed, with all parties assigned to execute the plan in attendance, to ensure shared understanding of the plan, validate the plan's feasibility and effectiveness, and identify any additional contingency plans needed.

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY MDMP CHECKLIST

STEP 1: Receipt of the Mission

1. Receive the mission from higher headquarters; if possible, provide a back-brief. Ensure the following in the leader's intent are clear:
   a. Desired end state
   b. Key/priority tasks to achieve end state
   c. Ultimate purpose of the mission
2. Create planning and preparation timeline identifying key milestones. Include deadlines for any subordinate units critical for your timeline.
3. Issue planning guidance to staff or planners

STEP 2: Mission Analysis

1. Analyze the mission and leader intent given from higher headquarters.
2. Determine specified, implied, and key/essential tasks.
   a. Specified tasks
   b. Implied tasks
   c. Key tasks
3. Conduct METT-TC analysis (METT-TC: mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, and civil considerations) and Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB).
   a. Mission
   b. Enemy/competition
   c. Terrain/environment/markets (What is the key terrain?)
   d. Troops/our human resources
   e. Time
   f. Civil considerations
4. Determine/refine constraints.
5. Identify critical facts and assumptions.
   a. Facts
   b. Assumptions
6. Perform risk assessment.
7. Develop and distribute the initial leader's guidance and warning order.
   a. Our team's mission statement
   b. Leader's intent
   c. Warning order

STEP 3: Develop Courses of Action

1. Generate COA options (must be suitable, feasible, acceptable, distinguishable, and complete); each COA should have its own "center of gravity"
2. Develop a concept of the operation for each (narrative, sketch, and/or matrix)
   a. Designate main effort and supporting effort teams/organizations

STEP 4: Course of Action Analysis (War-Gaming)

1. Determine evaluation criteria
2. Set the conditions
3. Assign the adjudicator
4. Conduct effective war game
   a. Conduct a stakeholder audit
   b. Conduct stakeholder analysis
   c. Consider how each COA will stand up against the most likely competitor COA, the most dangerous competitor COA, possible stakeholder actions, and Murphy's and Yhprum's Laws
   d. Identify critical events and decision points
5. Create LCIR (leader critical information requirements)
6. Create contingency plans
7. Refine the COA

STEP 5: Course of Action Comparison (use COA decision criteria identified in Step 3 to select the best COA)

STEP 6: COA Approval, Issue Orders, and Back-Briefs (refine and publish LCIR)

STEP 7: Rehearsals (rehearse the final plan and contingency plans, and identify any additional contingencies that may be faced; synchronize actions across interdependent units)

APPENDIX B. SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENT AND LEADER'S INTENT STATEMENT

Mission Statement: The Tactical Team conducts hostage rescue operations on the Plaza Trust Building, at 0630Z hours, 25 January 2020, in order to safely secure hostages and arrest or neutralize terrorists.

Leader's Intent: [Provides deeper elaboration on the mission from the leader's perspective]:

Purpose: Upon the failure of negotiations with the terrorists to release hostages, the Tactical Team is prepared to conduct an assault as part of the interagency task force to protect and exfiltrate hostages from terrorist control. The operation should be conducted with the purpose foremost of reducing risk to and securing liberty of the hostages, and secondarily to arrest or neutralize the threat and secure the scene for intelligence and evidence collection that will ensure proper chain of custody for criminal prosecutions and may help identify linkages to other terrorist cells, resources, leaders, or future terrorist operations.

Key tasks: (a) Conduct movement of the assault force and snipers through local law enforcement perimeter; (b) emplace snipers on all egress points and assault force at phase line yellow NLT 0600L; (c) on order, cut communications and power to building; (d) conduct failsafe breach; (e) arrest or neutralize subjects; (f) prevent injury or death to and move all hostages to safe holding location; (g) exfiltrate hostages through parking deck; (h) establish conditions for and clear the trauma unit to enter the parking deck through predetermined access point; (j) conduct turnover of scene to evidence collection team.

End state: By the end of the operation, all hostages are safe and secured at the linkup location in the parking deck and turned over to the trauma unit for triage and necessary medical care. All terrorists are taken into custody or neutralized. The building has been cleared to ensure no additional threats remain. The site is turned over to the evidence collection team, and the Tactical Team is linked up at the staging area for redeployment or additional missions.

APPENDIX C. SAMPLE COA SYNCHRONIZATION MATRIX

COA#____ Synch Matrix (Insert TItie of Course of Action)				
OPERATION TYPE	**ACTOR**	**PHASE 1 (Give title)**	**PHASE 2 (Give title)**	**PHASE 3 (Give title)**
DECISIVE	(List WHO/WHICH unit is performing the action)	(Describe WHAT the actor is doing during this phase and WHY [tasks and intent], and WHERE if applicable)		(Note that instead of "Phases" you can break the columns up based on Time)
SHAPING				
SUSTAINING				

COA#____ Synch Matrix (Insert TItie of Course of Action) *continued*			
IMPORTANT INFORMATION BY PHASE	**PHASE 1 (Give title)**	**PHASE 2 (Give title)**	**PHASE 3 (Give title)**
Self-Initiated Key/Critical Events:	(List key events that you control/influence that you expect to occur in each Phase)	(Ensure you capture at least the MOST LIKELY and MOST DANGEROUS possible key events)	(Include any operations related to key terrain and center of gravity in each Phase)
Externally Driven Key/Critical Events:	(List key events that others (competitors, markets, regulatory, etc.) control that may occur in each Phase)	(Ensure you capture at least the MOST LIKELY and MOST DANGEROUS possible key events)	
Key Decision Points:	(List any key decisions that will likely need to be made in each Phase)		
Risks Assessment:	(List any notable risks in each Phase not already listed elsewhere in the matrix)		
Organizational Structure of Team Composition Changes:	(Describe needed changes to create optimum organization to best implement COA)		
Critcal Resources:	(List any critical resources that must be secured or allocated in each Phase)		
Necessary Coordination:	(List critical coordination that must occur in each Phase, whether internal or external)		
Abreviations:	(Define/describe any abbreviations used in the matrix above)		

APPENDIX D. SAMPLE INFORMATION COLLECTION MATRIX

PRIORITY INTELLIGENCE REQUIREMENT	INDICATORS	SPECIFIC INFORMATION REQUIREMENT	NUMBERED CRITICAL EVENTS	START	STOP	ASSETS				DECISION POINT*	TARGET AREA OF INTEREST
						LOCAL POLICE	FBI AGENTS	CITY ENGINEERS	HRT		
2. Where are kidnappers deployed within the building?	2.1. Lights/ movement in the windows.	2.1.1. Report any movement within the windows.	1,2	H-24	H+3	TP	TA	NT	C	2	1
		2.1.2. Report any light or signs of life within the windows.	1,2	H-24	H+3	TP	TA	NT	C	2	1
	2.2. Known location of hardline phones.	2.2.1. Report location of hardline phones.	1	H-24	H+3	NT	NT	R	NT	2	1

C capable
H hour
NAI named area of interest
NT not tasked
R requested
TA tasked as alternate
TP tasked as primary

*Where Decision Point 2 might be the decision to breach into a building to subdue kidnappers and isolate/protect the hostages.

APPENDIX E. SAMPLE COA COMPARISON DECISION MATRIX

Course of Action Decision Matrix				
DECISION CRITERIA	**WEIGHTING**	**COA 1 (Title)**	**COA 2 (Title)**	**COA 3 (Title)**
	(Assign a weight based on importance of a criteria relative to others. E.g., "x3" means 3 times as important)	(Rank each COA relative to the criteria with 1 being best—note two COAs can both be ranked the same)		
List most important criteria				
List second most important criteria				
List third most important criteria				
List fourth most important criteria				
"				
COA total scores (lowest is best):				

NOTES

1. The MDMP is outlined in two U.S. Army publications: *The Operations Process*, Army Doctrinal Reference Publication 5-0, May 2012 (ensure you read ADRP 5-0, not ADP 5-0, because the reference publication is more detailed), https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/adrp/5–0/adrp5_0.pdf; and *Commander and Staff Officer Guide,* Army Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures No. 5-0.1, September 2011, https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/policy/army/attp/attp5-0-1.pdf.
2. The IPB is outlined in *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, Army Techniques Publication 2-01.3, March 2019, https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details.aspx?PUB_ID=1006342.
3. The center of gravity is outlined in *Operations*, Army Doctrine Publications 3-0, July 2019, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN18010-ADP_3–0-000-WEB-2.pdf.
4. Also see U.S. Army, *Red Team Handbook*, University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, G-2 Intelligence Support Activity, August 2018, https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/ufmcs/The_Red_Team_Handbook.pdf.
5. See Sean Hannah, "To Prepare for Every Possible Outcome, Try Red Teaming," *Chief Executive*, August 28, 2020, https://chiefexecutive.net/to-prepare-for-every-possible-outcome-try-red-teaming/. Also see the U.S. Army *Red Team Handbook*.

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CHAPTER 21

Anticipating and Preparing for the Unexpected through Red Teaming

KEVIN C. M. BENSON AND DAN COX

> *We need to help our commanders and staffs escape the gravitational pull of Western military thought.*
>
> Gen. Peter Schoomaker,
> Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 2006

WHAT IS RED TEAMING?

RED TEAMING IS A FUNCTION THAT PROVIDES fire departments, police departments, and military commanders and staffs the capability to fully explore alternative plans, operations, concepts, organizations, and capabilities in the context of the operational environment (OE) and from the perspectives of partners, adversaries, and others. A Red Team performs two general types of tasks: support to operations, planning, and decision making; and critical review and analysis of already existing plans.

The following elements are required for a Red Team to contribute effectively to decision making:

- The ability to think critically about the problem. While this may seem obvious, critical thinking is a skill set that requires training, education, and tools. For example, the U.S. Army assimilates people from different backgrounds across the nation. One of the drawbacks of that assimilation is its tendency to incorporate the same biases and perspectives that were already present. The Army prides itself in its common values—which while engrained in the Army culture are not universal outside of that culture.
- Thinking critically and challenging the group is unnatural for large staffs. Doing so effectively requires tools and methods that enable leaders to see different perspectives.

- Red Teams require top cover to be allowed to challenge the conventional wisdom and the organization's leaders. No matter the quality of the Red Team or the methods it employs, autocratic and narcissistic personalities are incompatible with successful Red Teaming.
- Red Teaming encourages, and relies upon, a transparent "learning" culture within an organization. Critical thinking demands learning, changing behaviors, and trust.
- Red Teamers must be effective written and oral communicators. They must have credibility in the area in which they are providing Red Teaming insights. They must be able to constructively challenge the plan. This means focusing on what is truly important, being able to explain why it is being challenged, and offering alternative ways to think about the problem. Building a Red Team with people the organization "can afford to give up" is a sure recipe for failure.
- There is no given template for a Red Teaming approach to a problem, no "one size fits all." Red Teaming activity must be tailored to specific requirements, such as: time available, expertise with the issue at hand, the makeup of the team, the degree senior leaders are engaged in decision making, and their predisposition to provide too much input.

Operational decision making is informed by the organization's culture. A Red Team can assist fire departments, police departments, and military commanders and their staffs to facilitate strategic and operational decision making that is informed by cultural empathy. While they are not cultural anthropologists, Red Teams incorporate aspects of cultural anthropology in designing their input in operations. This conscious examination of the role of ethnocentrism helps avoid "mirror imaging"—the tendency to see oneself in others and attribute one's beliefs to them, as if inside every foreigner is an American struggling to break out. The Red Team uses tools to help the team they are assisting to understand foreign cultural contexts and to foster empathy. A Red Team will draw on cultural-centric case studies in assisting the intelligence staff's appreciation of the enemy as well as the regional situation. Red Teams tend to ask *why* and *why not* rather than saying *do* or *don't*.

A Red Team works best behind the scenes, assisting the commander and staff in a noncritical, helpful manner, without taking credit. It is hard enough to accept somebody criticizing your thinking—it is much tougher if the person is obnoxious and loud in doing it.

While there is no set-in-stone formula for Red Teaming, there are some common activities that most Red Teams do most of the time. These include challenging facts and explicit assumptions, looking for implicit (unstated) assumptions, identifying cultural assumptions and developing targeted cultural questions for subject matter experts (SMEs), challenging the problem frame (and proposing alternative frames), and identifying

cognitive biases and symptoms of underlying groupthink. All these activities lead to the development of alternative perspectives.

THE PURPOSE OF DECISION-SUPPORT RED TEAMING

National security professionals regularly face technological disruption, socioeconomic upheaval, emerging threats, and rapidly accelerating change. In addition to external threats and challenges, leaders also often confront internal and interagency friction as they develop and execute critical plans, operations, and strategies. Leaders need flexible planning capabilities to best determine and respond to pressing problems and global challenges. The use of a decision-support Red Team empowers military, police, fire leaders, and government officials to identify and implement critical solutions and resolve interorganizational challenges while respecting and supporting differing organizational points of views, agenda, and equities. Decision-support Red Teams act on the premise that people and organizations court failure in predictable ways; by almost imperceptible degrees; and according to their mindsets, biases, and experience, which are formed in large part by their own culture and context. The sources of these failures are simple, observable, and too often repeated. They are also preventable, and that is the point of Red Teaming.

Red Teaming methods involve more than Socratic discussion and brainstorming. Red Teamers believe good decision-making processes are essential to good outcomes. To this end, Red Teaming and Red Team thinking are rich in divergent processes, critical thinking tools, and liberating structures aimed at decision support. Red Team thinkers use proven methods to develop a disposition of curiosity and help them become aware of biases and behavior that prevent positive change in the ways they seek solutions and engage others.

Red Team thinking borrows techniques, methods, frameworks, concepts, and best practices from several sources and disciplines.[1] These techniques and practical applications assist in establishing a culture of decision making that safeguards against individual and organizational tendencies toward biases, errors in cognition, and groupthink. Red Teaming is diagnostic, preventative, and corrective; yet it is neither predictive nor a solution. The penultimate goal is to be better prepared and less surprised in dealing with complexity.

COMPLEXITY MAKES RED TEAMING APPROPRIATE TO A WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONALS

Many people think that Red Teaming is solely used in the military or by businesses attempting to understand adversarial thinking and strategy, but in fact it can be applied to any organization facing a complex challenge. Red Teaming is appropriate and will greatly enhance those working in homeland security, law enforcement, and healthcare, to name just a few. After a brief overview linking Red Teaming and complexity, we will examine three specific nonmilitary and nonbusiness examples of Read Teaming.

Every environment, whether it is policing, a military expedition, first response to a chemical attack, or even a competitive business adventure, operates within a complex web

of social interactions and feedback loops that create new forms of novel opportunity and peril. This definition of complexity draws on the literature on complex adaptive systems, which is appropriate in the dynamic environments in which readers will find themselves operating.

Humans' complex adaptive systems include several characteristics that mandate the anticipation of the future and reacting and proactively acting toward other humans or human systems. A complete listing of these characteristics is unnecessary here, but explaining a few of them should be helpful. Complex adaptive systems have many feedback loops, which can either stabilize or destabilize part or all of the system.[2] As complex systems, human social systems are open; that is, they are susceptible to and dependent on influences, stimuli, and resources from outside of the system. The social system could be a state, clan, municipality, or even as small as a nuclear family.[3]

The openness of the system means that emergent properties will manifest, and second- and third-order effects will occur with any interaction with the system. Emergent properties and second-order effects are not the same, although they are often confused as such. Emergent properties are aspects of a system that are greater than the sum of the parts of the system. A forest ecosystem comprises flora, fauna, and microorganisms; but none of these organisms alone is a forest ecosystem. It is the interaction of these parts that creates the forest ecosystem.[4] Social groupings, nations, and adversaries have similar emergent properties.

Second-order effects are the unanticipated effects that occur when two complex adaptive systems interact. Interactions, intentional or not, can disrupt feedback loops, dispositions, propensities, and smaller systems contained within larger systems. These side effects can be helpful or hurtful. Red Teaming helps planners consider the possibility or range of possible side effects and plan for both potential pitfalls and opportunities.

When one system interacts with another, a new system of interaction develops. In some cases the interaction can be "so transformative that we no longer fruitfully distinguish between actors and their environments let alone say much about any element in isolation."[5] Understanding the other and the other's way of seeing is essential to discerning complex actors in an environment when they begin interacting.

Complexity and complexity theory may seem daunting and unapproachable, but the study of complexity can be broken down into accessible language. Understanding complex environments is what Red Teaming is all about. The process is aimed at forcing people within an organization to think like an adversary or within the confines of an unusual event or situation. This is part of the reason why Red Teaming is appropriate for a much larger array of professionals than simply the military and business professionals.

Complexity theory tells us that almost any interaction between groups of people will be highly complex. Individuals act as unpredictable variables, and while we can anticipate some group behavior, it is often the case that mistaken assumptions, especially across cultures, lead to mistakes in planning and dealing with human complexity.

Human culture has been described as interwoven webs of sometimes indiscernible meaning. If this was not challenging enough, humans develop subtle biases from being immersed in their own cultures. Errors in judgment occur because planners begin to engage in mirror imaging of the other in a different culture. Americans are especially prone to mirror imaging; that is, planners, strategists, and others are prone to view another culture through the lens of their own cultural predispositions rather than through the lenses people in that other culture use.

Stephen Reed's *Making Common Sense of Japan* offers an apt example of mirror imaging that occurred when he first began studying Japanese political culture. As he was walking to the subway from the faculty dormitory, he noticed that a light mist in the air caused the Japanese commuters to unfurl their umbrellas as they walked to the subway station. He laughed to himself and thought that the Japanese people must be weak to be so afraid of a little moisture. Americans were far more rugged. By the time Reed reached the subway station, however, he was soaking wet, as if he had walked through pouring rain, and his suit was unwearable. He could not present himself to his Japanese counterparts at the university in this state, so he had to walk back to the dormitory and change. Reed also grabbed an umbrella before returning to campus.

Such cultural misperceptions are common across all cultures that do not intermingle on a regular basis. Planners often lack the time and money to properly immerse themselves in an opposing culture, to learn the language and all the local cultural nuances. Further, planners may have to engage so many different cultures that even if immersion were possible, the number of cultures would render it moot. Red Teaming forces planners to step outside their culture and engage in methodologies that combat biases like mirror imaging. The more time that is allotted to do that, the deeper this process becomes. A planner who needs to think like a Russian and is given some classes or books on Russian history, politics, economics, demographics, and culture is going to be better able to see the world through a Russian lens. Even Westerners immersed in Russia for decades will never fully think like a Russian, but this cultural immersion is better than acting as if Russians think like Americans.

We have so far considered only the complexities of foreign cultures, but all nations contain distinct local and regional cultures, and cultural misperceptions are just as common between regions and localities—such as the inner city and the suburbs—as they are between nations.[6] The recent Black Lives Matters protests are indicative of how misperceptions in America about race relations manifest; and these types of misperceptions are common across many different countries.[7] Red Teaming is thus appropriate for a whole host of planners and actors ranging from law enforcement agents to healthcare professionals.

Adding to cultural complexity is the fact that cultures change, sometimes very quickly. Recent events in the stock market may be indicative of a disruptive cultural shift. In the 1990s, a new form of computer-aided trading arose. Hedge funds used this high-frequency,

algorithmic trading to gain an advantage over retail investors. Since the algorithm can process information faster than humans can, it can see opportunities to invest short or long and price options and stock purchases in a such a way as to exploit inefficiencies that an individual cannot fathom. A group of rebellious retail investors started a Reddit thread called "wallstreetbets" and began researching stocks. When they found a giant hedge fund shorting a particular stock that met specific parameters, they coordinated to purchase stocks and options. They found such a stock in late January 2021 and began purchasing call options methodically in an attempt to get the hedge fund to cover, which would force it to buy stock to cover its options. The three million wallstreetbets investors thought that if they could flood the market for the Gamestop stock properly, the movement would cascade and the price would skyrocket as the hedge fund was forced to lock in more and more losses by buying more and more stock. Since wallstreetbets had so many call options, they figured that the hedge fund's purchase of stock would exacerbate the upward trend. Their plan worked. Three days after wallstreetbets launched their plan, Gamestop rose from $10 a share to $390. The hedge fund lost more than $10 billion in three days. Wallstreetbets replicated this process in several other stocks, and they are likely in the process of changing the way people and institutions invest.

The hedge fund planners were caught off guard the same way a planner in any field can be caught off guard. The result in this case was billions in net losses because the planners failed to understand wallstreetbets' strategy. So far, the hedge funds are failing to put themselves in the shoes of the other, are dismissing the threat, and refuse to see stock investing through the eyes of a new adversary. Hedge fund managers could use some Red Teaming at this point.

The point is that even if you knew how institutional investors conducted business in 2020, major events in 2022 are changing the culture and calculus, so Red Teaming must be a constant process or it is of limited value. Red Teaming is as much about continually learning about a culture and system as it is about going through the actual Red Teaming methodologies.

Red Teaming is akin to practicing medicine in that both are diagnostic, preventative, and corrective. A well-trained Red Team understands that monitoring and periodic checkups are preferable to intervention. And team members also know that different situations might call for intervention, prevention, triage, a second opinion, or a dose of common sense. The applications for Red Teaming are dependent on the needs of the unit or business. The team needs to be aware of the scope of important efforts, and savvy enough to know where they can reinforce the effort.

The following are some important questions to consider when practicing Red Teaming. Some have definite answers; some answers depend on the context and the needs of the unit:

- What does a Red Team look like? (Ad hoc, standing team, an individual, or an on-call team?)

- What does it do? (Challenges assumptions, tests hypotheses, explores alternatives, and heightens awareness.)
- Who are the best people to do it? (Rank and education are not exclusive discriminators. You want reflective, critical thinkers with a curious disposition.)
- When is it done? (Continuous, on call, in planning, or when things are going poorly?)
- To whom does the Red Team belong?
- Where does Red Teaming belong in the planning process? (Everywhere.)

A RECOMMENDED RED TEAM PROCESS

Red Team thinking methods have proven effective in military units and organizations ranging from brigades to the Joint Staff. Red Team thinking methods are designed to improve critical thinking, and they proceed from the premise that before you point out to someone the errors of their thinking, you had better understand your own.

People are generally disinclined to challenge prevailing thoughts. Red Teams challenge people to examine things they hold sacrosanct. We point out to them the ethnocentrism of their own thinking, their over-reliance on method, their tendency to default to Western/Aristotelian logic, their lack of appreciation for the frames that subconsciously capture their thinking, their failure to avoid common cognitive biases, and their predisposition to seek consensus while exhibiting classic symptoms of groupthink.

Red Team thinking revolves around some fundamental questions:

- What does it mean to be "self-aware?"
- When I perceive and interpret information, what are those interpretations based upon?
- What do I value and believe? Why? How do these values and beliefs motivate my behavior? How do others' values and beliefs motivate their behaviors *differently*?
- How can cultural anthropology help me think about another culture and avoid mirror imaging?
- How do I improve my ability to think critically?

The intent of applying Red Team thinking methods is to inculcate behaviors designed to make critical thinking a discipline. The outcome of this process is not only the improvement of one's own cognitive capabilities but also more nuanced courses of action or proposals for action presented to senior leaders and commanders. Red Team thinking helps staff members think like senior leaders.

Applying the methods of Red Teaming is additive to the application of the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) or any organizational decision-making process.

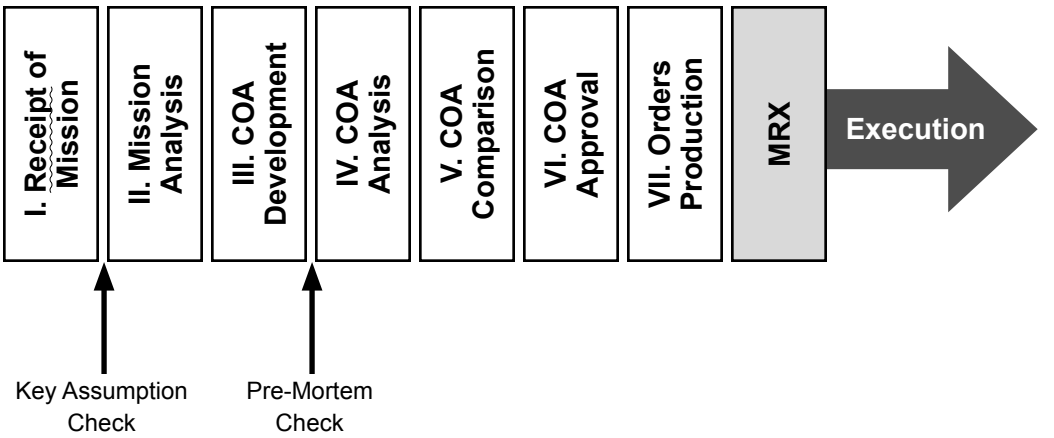

FIGURE 21.1. The Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP)

Process-focused organizations such as the U.S. Army and fire and police departments tend to use proven methods within a doctrinal process. A focused method of posing and answering questions that fits neatly into the steps of the doctrinal process of decision making adds value and nuance to the results of the process and to the overall desired product—to wit, a plan that might work. These methods help planners anticipate what could happen and empower staffs to produce good options for senior leaders who must take decisions and then guide action as an operation unfolds within the context of the environment, the enemy, and other actors.

By way of example, consider how the application of two different Red Team thinking methods can enhance two steps of the MDMP. This process is discussed extensively in chapter 20, but here we focus on a few areas germane to Red Teaming.

RED TEAMING WITHIN THE U.S. ARMY MILITARY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

A key assumption check and a pre-mortem check are two methods easily adapted to the MDMP (figure 21.1). When incorporated into the process, they add value and do not take up much time. These two methods also encourage other voices to speak up and, more important, be heard and considered.[8]

The key assumptions check is most useful at the beginning of the MDMP, Step 1, Receipt of Mission; or Step 2, Mission Analysis. When developing a plan, we make assumptions to take the place of facts we need to continue planning (e.g., the host nation will allow use of its sea and airports, the government will allow the use of the civilian passenger and cargo aircraft to support movement of our forces). Inside the military or out, people find it difficult to identify and develop the assumptions on which plans are based. In formal decision-making processes, once the senior leader approves the assumptions they are rarely questioned again. But a team can and should spend an hour or two

articulating and reviewing the key assumptions before they are approved to ensure that the assessment does not rest on flawed premises. Identifying hidden assumptions can be one of the most difficult challenges a planning team faces because they are ideas held—often unconsciously—to be true and therefore are seldom examined and almost never challenged. *At a minimum, ask and answer the question, "What happens to the plan if this assumption does not become a fact?"*

The following questions assist in guiding the conduct of the method.

- How confident are we that this assumption is correct?
- What explains the degree of confidence in the assumption?
- What circumstances or information might undermine this assumption?
- Is a key assumption more likely a key uncertainty or a key factor?
- Could the assumption have been true in the past but not now?
- If the assumption proves to be wrong, would it significantly alter the plan? How?
- Has this process identified new factors that need further analysis?

Conducting a key assumption check at the start of MDMP broadens the context and base of understanding for the entire team and results in a better overall plan. War-gaming to compare proposed courses of action (COA) is a critical step in the MDMP. Planning teams often develop a course of action and become attached to it. Objective thinking is needed when engaging in comparing course of action and when recommending a particular COA to a fire, military, or police commander or senior leader.

A pre-mortem to identify key vulnerabilities in a plan is useful at any point during the conduct of the MDMP and the plan's execution. A very useful point for using this method is prior to MDMP Step 4, COA Analysis. By Step 4 the planning team has likely settled on one COA, but it may be that each member of the COA development team is convinced that their COA is best. Conducting a pre-mortem prior to war-gaming shakes preconceived notions of, for example, how an adversary will react, or deeply held beliefs that one's proposed course of action is *the* correct answer to the challenge the group is facing. Conducting a pre-mortem prior to using the action-reaction-counteraction method of war-gaming provides for a richer conduct of the war game and helps decision makers and planners anticipate problems.

The pre-mortem exercise has four steps:

Step 1. *Preparation.* All members should be familiar with the base plan, at a minimum. Assume the plan was approved and executed.

Step 2. *Imagine a fiasco.* Assume the plan failed. Ask why this happened. What could have caused the failure? Specifically, ask what are the *reasons* the fiasco occurred?

Step 3. *Generate the reasons for failure.* Participants individually spend no more than fifteen minutes writing down all the possible reasons for failure. It is important to

do this individually first, so that the insights and experience of each participant are brought to bear. Again, take no more than *fifteen minutes* to think and write.

Step 4. *Consolidate the lists.* Go around the room and solicit input from all members of the team, one at a time. Record the ideas on a whiteboard or poster paper. Continue until all ideas are exhausted. Keep the list and periodically review it during execution of the operation or training event.

Red Team thinking methods can also be of great value to any organization regardless of how the organization arrives at plans, conducts operations, and takes decisions, as highlighted in the following vignettes.

Vignette 1. Implementation of Police Foot Patrols—Pre-mortem

In the spring of 2009, a middle-sized city in the central United States was facing a rising violent crime rate. The pressure on the city government—the mayor, city manager, and city council—to do something about it was mounting. There was equal pressure on the metropolitan police department to devise solutions to the issue. Compounding the challenge, the rising violent crime rate was focused in minority districts within the established police "division areas." To combat these crimes the chief of police proposed sending foot patrols into these districts. The city government publicly supported this proposal as a means to get the violence in the city under control.

The purpose of the foot patrols was to reengage with the local communities on a more personal level. The patrol officers "on a beat" and local people would get to know each other and establish a more personal relationship to build trust. The department looked at the results from other mid-sized cities with similar programs and adapted those programs to the conditions of its city. The local newspaper carried a story about the program, and the faculty of the U.S. Army University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies (UFMCS) offered to Red Team the proposal.

As a thought exercise in the application of Red Teaming methods, a faculty member and students from UFMCS conducted a pre-mortem analysis of the proposed policy. The pre-mortem was applied based on information from open sources—the local city newspaper—and information provided by police contacts. The group conducting the pre-mortem consisted of military officers at UFMCS, not police officers. All group members had served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. All had conducted mounted and dismounted patrols, albeit under completely different conditions than a police department would face in a U.S. city. The fifteen minutes spent on thinking about what could cause the foot patrol program to fail resulted in a list of possible points of failure.

The points of failure ranged from the failure of the department to effectively publicize the purpose of the program within the community to cases of heat exhaustion among the officers conducting the foot patrols. The program was to begin in July,

but the initial planning documents from the police department had made no provision for water/hydration. Other possible points of failure included communications "dead zones" for the tactical radios provided to the foot patrols and the need for a mounted quick reaction force in case a foot patrol encountered a situation larger than it could handle. This also included a means to transport suspects to police stations for questioning and processing.

A unique potential point of possible failure was the rejection of the concept by the police union. The union pointed out to the leadership of the department that officers who were beyond their initial probation period after graduation from the police academy did not have to accept assignment to a foot patrol. The implementation of the program would thus be carried out by rookie police officers still in their probation period immediately after graduation from the police academy.

These results of the pre-mortem were passed on through informal contacts within the department, and adjustments were in fact made to the implementation of the foot patrol plan and subsequent operations. The foot patrols were extremely popular with the citizens in the districts patrolled by these new officers, and the application of the pre-mortem analysis made a difference in the actual execution of the program.[9]

Vignette 2 highlights the utility of another Red Teaming method, Stakeholder Mapping (see figure 21.2). Stakeholder Mapping is a diagnostic tool for use in analysis, influence, negotiation, and decision support. It should be used when the Red Team needs to demonstrate the breadth of effects a planned operation can have within an operating area. Using intelligence and information available, the Red Team can develop a perspective on operations that will enhance the staff's appreciation of potential unintended consequences of operations. The Red Team can also suggest methods of improving the

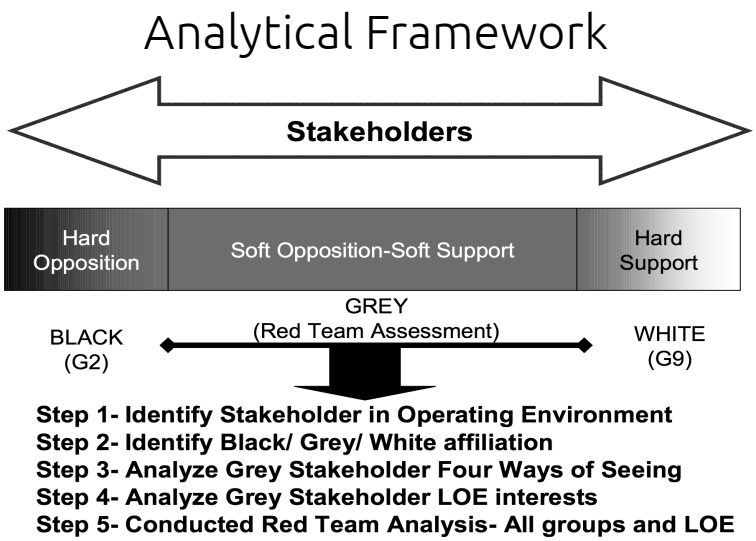
Analytical Framework
Stakeholders
Hard Opposition
Soft Opposition-Soft Support
Hard Support
BLACK (G2)
GREY (Red Team Assessment)
WHITE (G9)
Step 1- Identify Stakeholder in Operating Environment
Step 2- Identify Black/ Grey/ White affiliation
Step 3- Analyze Grey Stakeholder Four Ways of Seeing
Step 4- Analyze Grey Stakeholder LOE interests
Step 5- Conducted Red Team Analysis- All groups and LOE

FIGURE 21.2. Stakeholder Mapping

impact of an operation on groups that are "on the fence" regarding their support for the planned operation. Stakeholder Mapping's greatest value is in the campaign design phase of decision making, specifically in framing the problem, because it views the operational environment from a systemic perspective. The analysis provides the commander and planners with insights regarding how the stakeholders view operations in the battle space.

Vignette 2. Supporting Multinational Division Center Iraq 2008—Stakeholder Mapping

In September 2008 the chief of staff, 25th Infantry Division (25th ID) asked the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies to assist the division staff as it prepared for its deployment to Iraq, where it would take control of the Multinational Division–North (MND-N) area of operations. UFMCS sent a seminar leader and four students. The UFMCS team met with the chief of staff and briefed him on tools/capabilities that could be utilized to assist the 25th ID's planning efforts. Based on this meeting the chief of staff decided that the newest UFMCS tool—Stakeholder Mapping—was most needed. The chief of staff wanted the team to tell him "where are those who want success and where are those who want failure" on the battlefield. The team used the planning documents produced by the division, direct access for interviews with the staff (as authorized/directed by the chief of staff), and information available through classified and open sources. Over a period of four days the UFMCS team conducted this analysis in support of the division staff's orders development process.

There were numerous groups in the division's area of operations to consider. Since it was impossible for the Red Team to identify and map all of them in the time available, it was necessary to separate the potentially most influential groups from the others. The initial effort at identifying the entire range of groups included identifying the strong supporters of the coalition and government of Iraq at the White end of the spectrum of support/opposition, and those who opposed coalition and Iraqi efforts for any reason at the Black end. The remaining Gray groups could potentially be swayed toward mission success, or at least away from actively supporting the Black groups. The analysis of the Iraqi groups was complicated by the fact that they were perpetually transforming: changing allegiances, developing or losing their economic base, amalgamating with other groups, and so on. This preliminary analysis could identify the groups most likely to be influenced by positive coalition and Iraqi government action.

Prior to the arrival of the UFMCS Red Team, the division commander spoke with representatives from local newspapers. In one of his comments the division commander said one of the division's tasks while deployed in Iraq was to exert control over the Iraq-Syria border. The division staff initially translated this statement to mean that the division would be attacking groups of smugglers and interdicting their routes of travel. The staff viewed tribes in the border region through the lens of potential

enemies. The Red Team learned of this through talks with the staff as the team gathered information for its analysis.

After identifying the important groups, the second step of the Stakeholder Mapping process was to classify groups as "hard support," or pro-coalition; "hard opposition," or opposed to coalition objectives; or "soft opposition–soft support," those who either chose not to take sides or played both sides. An example of a Black player was al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The former Sunni insurgents, called "Sons of Iraq," were White players. The team assessed each of the Gray groups by province in the division area of operations (AOR) and used the UFMCS "Four Ways of Seeing" to complete the analysis that began with Stakeholder Mapping (see figure 21.3). At the conclusion of the analysis the team identified a number of Gray groups that the 25th ID should engage through personal contact and information operations. The Bedouin al-Shammer tribe was one such Gray group.

The al-Shammer tribe numbers one and a half million people in northern Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. The al-Shammer do not see the Iraq-Syria border as a barrier to movement, because the border bisects traditional tribal lands. This fact could either lead to conflict with the governments of Iraq and Syria and coalition forces or offer an opportunity to enhance a level of control over the border without the commitment of coalition forces.[10] *The team focused on the tribe's flexible loyalty and cross-border fluidity.*

Based on Four Ways of Seeing analysis as a part of the Stakeholder Mapping, the Red Team suggested that instead of viewing the al-Shammer as enemies, it would be better to engage the tribe and its leaders in a more business-like exchange. The 25th ID

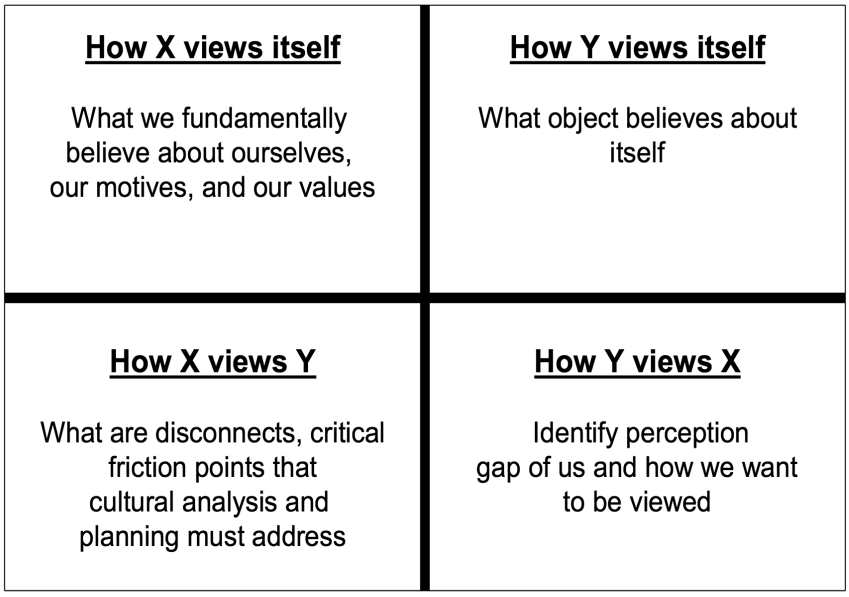
How X views itself
What we fundamentally believe about ourselves, our motives, and our values
How Y views itself
What object believes about itself
How X views Y
What are disconnects, critical friction points that cultural analysis and planning must address
How Y views X
Identify perception gap of us and how we want to be viewed

FIGURE 21.3. Four Ways of Seeing

did not want the tribe to bring bombs, arms, munitions, and jihad-motivated individuals into Iraq, but did not object to the smuggling of other trade goods. The division mission did not include the collection of Iraqi import duties. The Red Team suggested establishing a business type of relationship. The implicit threat, of course, was that if the tribe violated its agreements the results would be unpleasant. There would be an initial good faith approach, enhanced by a deeper understanding of the history of the tribe. Demonstrating good faith through actions offered an opportunity for the division and the Iraqi government to restrict the activities of foreign fighters coming through Syria.

THE RED TEAMING/CRITICAL THINKING PROCESS

The ability to think creatively—the ability and disposition to generate ideas that are both new and useful—is very important for fire, police, and military leaders, teams, and staffs. However, many aspects of military and other hierarchical cultures tend to impede creative thinking. Some of the barriers to creative thinking include time pressures, hierarchical structures, emphasis on uniformity and training standards, and a predilection for risk avoidance due to the potential for severely negative outcomes of flawed decisions.

The thoughts and actions by which people generate novel and adaptive ideas can be modeled by a five-stage process. Although the linear model described below is a useful tool for describing and understanding how creative ideas are generated, in actual inventive situations the stages of the process tend to blend together, and the progression is iterative and nonlinear.

Stage 1: Problem Finding

The first stage in the Red Teaming/critical thinking process is problem finding. Many successful innovators believe that this is the most crucial stage of the process.[11] The key in this stage is to see beyond the symptoms to gain an understanding of the underlying or root causes of the problem and how the current situation differs from the desired state. Effective problem finding can be very difficult when you are facing complex or unstructured problems. Additionally, when teams conduct problem finding in organizational settings, they often face significant challenges such as groupthink and confirmation bias.

Red Team tools: Red Teamers can greatly assist leaders during this stage of the Red Teaming/critical thinking process by using Red Team tools, especially Shifting the Burden, Stakeholder Mapping, Problem Framing, Cultural Perception Framework, Four Ways of Seeing, Five Whys, and Analysis of Competing Hypotheses. Alternative Futures Analysis is also a very useful way for leaders to anticipate and prevent future problems.

Stage 2: Preparation

After finding the problem, the team immerses itself in the problem. During the preparation stage, the team typically tries all previously known solutions. If the team discovers a

solution that works during this initial search, it applies the solution and moves on, especially in time-sensitive situations.

The goal during preparation is to learn as much as possible about the problem, the context, and even how similar problems have been solved in different domains. There are also significant challenges to teams in this stage, including:

1. The tendency to erroneously identify the problem to be like one that they have previously experienced and to which they have a known solution
2. The tendency to oversimplify complex problems
3. The tendency for groupthink
4. Failure to challenge, or even to be aware of assumptions
5. The tendency to minimize or deny the presence of problems in order to avoid blame or the appearance of weakness/ignorance

Red Team tools: Red Teamers can assist leaders and teams during the preparation stage using Red Team tools such as Key Assumptions Check, Think-Write-Share, and Five Whys.[12] The preparation stage continues until the team either finds a potential applicable solution to try or ceases mental work on the problem.

Stage 3: Ideation

The third stage of the Red Teaming/critical thinking process, ideation, is probably the stage most often associated with creativity. This stage also is an individual action. Even when the planning or problem solving is conducted collaboratively by a team, the initial creative insight occurs to a single person. Having said that, working collaboratively in the preparation stage can significantly increase the chances of any individual in the group experiencing a creative insight, especially in teams comprising people with diverse perspectives, experiences, and areas of expertise. Beginning with Graham Wallas' book *The Art of Thought*, published in 1926, there has been a widely accepted notion that the ideation stage consists of two steps: incubation and illumination.

Incubation begins when the leader or team working on the problem puts the problem aside and either begins deliberately working on a different problem or enters a state of cognitive relaxation. Although creative insights rarely occur while the person is studying and actively thinking about the problem (the preparation stage), they are much more likely to occur if the preparation stage was thorough and the person consciously thought about the problem in detail and from different perspectives.

At some point during the incubation stage an insight comes to mind, often suddenly. This is the illumination. One of the best accounts of the incubation and illumination stages is from German scientist and prolific inventor Herman von Helmholtz:

> Often . . . [ideas] appeared without any effort on my part, like an inspiration. They never came to a fatigued brain and never at the writing desk. It was always

> necessary, first of all, that I should have turned my problem over on all sides to such an extent that I had all its angles and complexities in my head. Then there must come an hour of complete physical freshness and quiet well-being before the good ideas arrived. Often, they were there in the morning when I first awoke. But they liked especially to make their appearance while I was taking an easy walk over wooded hills in sunny weather.[13]

Red Team tools: Red Teamers can assist leaders and teams during this stage to think more divergently and bring about more creative insights using Red Team tools such as Divergence-Convergence or TRIZ Structured Brainstorming.

Stage 4: Idea Verification

Once the person has experienced the insight and has a new and creative idea, she shares it with the team. The team members need to think it through, asking themselves questions such as, "Will this actually work?" and "What would happen if . . .?" In most cases, the creative insight generated during the illumination is incomplete. As psychologist J. S. Dacey noted about the idea verification stage, this is where "the idea must be tested against the cold reality of fact."[14]

Teams tend to be more effective at idea verification than individuals because they can help mitigate the natural tendency to "fall in love with your idea" and disregard potential causes of failure due to wishful thinking, pride, and protective instinct. It is very natural for a person to develop a personal attachment to their new idea. It is critical, but indeed not natural, to dispassionately and objectively analyze and critique the new idea. Teams are better than individuals during this stage only if they operate in a climate conducive to candor and characterized by intrateam trust. To be successful, it is also very important for them to have processes in place to mitigate the tendency for groupthink. Teams, especially when comprising members with diverse areas of expertise and perspectives, can better anticipate how the implementation of the new idea might impact other aspects of the organization.

Red Team tools: Red Teaming tools, and especially a Red Teaming mindset, can greatly enhance the effectiveness of individuals and teams during the idea verification stage. The Red Team tools that tend to be most useful during this stage are Pre-mortem Analysis, What If? Analysis, Stakeholder Mapping, and Fishbowl.

Stage 5: Communication

During the communication stage, the person or team that generated the new idea informs the relevant organizational stakeholders of the idea. The goal at this stage is to communicate the new idea in a way that the relevant stakeholder

1. Understands the idea, the problem that the idea is meant to solve, and the associated costs and risks of implementing the new idea; and

2. Supports the idea. This is, of course, a critical step because a new idea, no matter how brilliant, is of no value to the organization until it is implemented. And to be implemented, the idea must be shared with those in the organization who can direct actions such as committing resources, changing policy, or reprioritizing efforts and assets.

For ease of description, communication is listed here as a single stage. In practice, however, especially in collaborative settings, the communication of a new idea is often done in multiple steps, interwoven with the idea verification stage in an iterative sequence. There are a few significant challenges to success during this stage as well, especially if the person with the creative idea is not among the organization's senior leaders. These challenges include the following.

1. The organizational climate in hierarchical units can often appear to its members as unreceptive to ideas that challenge the status quo. Such organizational climates can deter members who aren't senior leaders from sharing their creative ideas.
2. The creative person needs to be able to communicate the new idea in a manner that is understandable by the leaders. The more creative the idea is, the tougher it will be for people unfamiliar with the idea to understand it.

Red Team tools: The Red Team methods and tools that can best assist leaders and teams during this stage include

- Stakeholder Mapping, specifically the analysis of interests step. Identifying the specific interests of key stakeholders enables the creative team to articulate how the implementation of the new idea would serve the stakeholders' interests.
- A variation of Argument Deconstruction; specifically, using the tool to help construct a compelling argument that ensures sound logic with clearly stated premises that sufficiently support the desired conclusion.
- A variation of Determining the Suitability of an Analogy combined with the Four Ways of Seeing. Using an analogy can be an effective way to use a familiar concept to communicate an unfamiliar concept (the new idea) in a compelling manner.[15] To be effective, the communicator must be sure that the receiver is familiar with the source concept and perceives it in a favorable way. Four Ways of Seeing is a tool to help envision another person's perspective and thereby gain empathic accuracy.

The ability to think creatively promises to be increasingly important for all manner of leaders and teams. With some practice and study, the Red Team tools described in this chapter and the works cited in it can significantly enhance leaders' abilities to think creatively and to foster organizational climates in their units that develop and facilitate their subordinates' creative thinking.

SUMMARY

People and organizations court failure in predictable ways, by degrees, almost imperceptibly, and according to their own culture and context. As a countermeasure, we can fully explore alternatives in that context and from differing perspectives. We call this function Red Teaming. Red Teaming requires challenging the facts, problem frame, and assumptions. This function also seeks to qualify the assumptions, develop targeted cultural questions, and propose alternative perspectives, as well as identify cognitive biases, groupthink mitigations, and so on. To that end, organizations can utilize individuals taught to execute Red Teaming or charter an empowered Red Team (standing, ad hoc, or on call). Either way, Red Teaming works best behind the scenes. Red Team thinking requires challenging the facts, problem frame, and assumptions. This function also seeks to qualify the assumptions, develop targeted cultural questions, and propose alternative perspectives, as well as identify any cognitive biases, groupthink mitigations, etc. There are no wrong answers, you will make discoveries, gain insight, and develop a culture of candor within your organizations.

Military and security professionals can no longer base their philosophy and conduct of campaigning against a range of capable peers on the assumptions of preeminence left over from the 1990s, obsolete conceptions of armed conflict, and their combat experiences against inferior adversaries. Applying Red Team thinking methods ensures that the nuances of changing conditions—friendly/enemy/neutral—are considered when developing the campaigns and plans required for success in the twenty-first century.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Red Team thinking works. It is additive to any decision-making process, structured or unstructured.
2. The leadership of your organization must be willing to accept alternative perspectives. If they are not, the application of Red Team thinking is an insurgent movement.
3. Applying Red Team thinking methods takes humility and courage. You must be humble enough to realize you are not the smartest person in the room, and you must have the courage to act upon a good suggestion, no matter the source.
4. When you ask, "What if," and someone replies with a variation of "a meteor could hit the planet," just chuckle, write it down, and move on to the next answer. The object is to engage the group and listen to everybody's contribution.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Bryce Hoffman, *Red Teaming*; Gary Klein, *The Power of Intuition* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Dietrich Doerner, *The Logic of Failure*; and Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow.*
2. Everett Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Frank Cass, 2005).
3. Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity,* 2nd ed. (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2006), 30.
4. Yaneer bar-Yam, *Making Things Work: Solving Complex Problems in a Complex World* (Cambridge, MA: Knowledge Press, 2005).
5. Robert Jervis, *Systems Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 59.
6. Erin Meyer, *The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead, and Get Things Done across Cultures* (New York: Public Affairs Publishers, 2016).
7. Casey Bond, "7 Myths about Black Lives Matter that People Need to Stop Believing," *Huffington Post* online, http://huffpost.com/entry/black-lives-matter-myths_I_5f63bda7c5b6c6317d0188bb.
8. See University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies (UFMCS), *Red Team Handbook*, https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/documents/ufmcs/The_Red_Team_Handbook.pdf. Key assumptions check is on p. 163, pre-mortem on p. 173.
9. This vignette is based on an actual UFMCS seminar application of pre-mortem conducted in the spring of 2009. Specific details such as the names of the city and police department are omitted in accord with an MOU between UFMCS and the department.
10. See www.shmmr.net, the website of the al-Shammer tribe. Information also derived from discussions with Sammeh Youseff, cultural adviser to the commanding general, 25th Infantry Division.
11. M. A. Runco and C. Ivonne, "Problem Finding, Problem Solving, and Creativity," in *Problem Finding, Problem Solving, and Creativity*, ed. Mark A. Runco (Norwood, NJ: Greenwood, 1994), 40. For a description of all the Red Team thinking methods mentioned in this section, see UFMCS, *Red Team Handbook*.
12. See UFMCS, *Red Team Handbook.*
13. John Kounios and Mark Beeman, *The Eureka Factor: Aha Moments, Creative Insights, and the Brain* (New York: Random House, 2015), 29.
14. John S. Dacey, *Fundamentals of Creative Thinking* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), 86.
15. Cynthia Sifonis, Adrian Chernoff, and Kevin Kolpasky, "Analogy as a Tool for Communicating about Innovation," *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management* 3, no. 1 (2006): 1–19.

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CHAPTER 22

The Art of Incident Command

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN THE UNITED STATES has evolved as a result of ineffective responses to natural disasters, attacks on our national security, acts of violence resulting in mass casualties, and incidents of civil unrest. Each incident has resulted in lessons learned highlighting our vulnerabilities and the complicated process of developing a comprehensive, coordinated response. First responders in many major metropolitan areas have underestimated the threats, available resources, and coordinated efforts necessary to effectively manage incidents such as the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, mass shootings, and situations involving civil unrest. The adage "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail" could never be more accurately applied than today.

THE EVOLUTION OF INCIDENT COMMAND

While 20/20 hindsight allows easy criticism, the initial credit for emergency response preparedness goes to the firefighting community. They were on the leading edge of developing processes and protocols related to Incident Command while law enforcement and other agencies lagged behind. During the 1970 California fire season, a series of devastating wildfires resulted in the creation of Firefighting Resources of Southern California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE). The destructive fires that year were met with a response effort that failed to integrate assets and resources. The resultant redundancies and failure to interface diminished precious resources and led to the establishment of multiple fire camps, each with a separate command post.[1]

As the wildfires ravished California, Congress mandated that the U.S. Forest Service develop a comprehensive system that would effectively coordinate the multijurisdictional response necessary to address these crises. Although the response to the fires was significant, breakdowns in communication, limited resources, and lack of coordination were evident. The Forest Service recognized that a needs analysis, creation of a strategic plan,

preparation and training, execution, and evaluation were all essential key components for operational success. The Incident Command System (ICS) was established as a result. The ICS is a standardized approach to command, control, and on-scene incident management for ensuring interoperability involving multiagency and multijurisdictional responses to critical incidents. It provides for effective operations by implementing a single common hierarchy for personnel from multiple agencies and organizations, regardless of jurisdiction. ISC applies across diverse disciplines and gives incident managers the ability to combine procedures, personnel, equipment, facilities, and communications.

The Federal Response Plan (FRP) developed in 1992 created the foundation for the implementation of the ICS. Under the FRP, the federal government provides resources to state, county, and local authorities to prepare for and respond to critical incidents.[2] The resources provided by virtue of the FRP include personnel, technical expertise, equipment, and supplemental assistance from a multitude of federal agencies and departments. FEMA has oversight authority for the FRP.

THE 9/11 ATTACKS

As the FRP ushered in more reliance on the ICS, global terror threats began to proliferate. The system designed to coordinate emergency response soon faced an unprecedented challenge. On September 11, 2001, Osama bin Laden's team of al-Qaeda assassins carried out terror attacks that murdered nearly three thousand people. The ICS had been tested before, but the scope of this crisis was beyond what any first responders had ever seen. Nineteen terrorists on four commercial jets filled with innocent passengers employed the jets as missiles—smashing into both towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and an empty field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The 9/11 attacks ultimately reshaped U.S. national security focus and efforts; essentially ushering in a restructuring of how agencies interfaced, a realignment of missions, and repair to the interoperability failures highlighted by the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States.[3] The 9/11 Commission laid bare the multitude of failings within the lead-up and reaction to the crisis. Each new incident that arises allows an opportunity to reflect on and enhance our response to incidents and application of the ICS. Even with the ICS firmly established and exercised during incidents in subsequent decades, its practical application has quite often been shortcut, modified, or subject to interpretation.

THE THEORETICAL STRUCTURE OF INCIDENT COMMAND

In 2004, three years after the 9/11 attacks, FEMA, operating within the Department of Homeland Security, published the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to enhance unity of efforts by providing a common interoperable approach to sharing resources and effective communication for managing incidents. At its core, NIMS is organized around three main management concepts.[4]

1. Resource Management. Describes standard mechanisms to systematically manage resources, including personnel, equipment, supplies, teams, and facilities, both before and during incidents, in order to allow organizations to more effectively share resources when needed.

An abundance of resources is not always the solution to a particular incident. New York City's police and fire departments are the envy of the world. In the "fog of war" of the 9/11 attacks, however, multiple agencies descended upon the scene without integrated radio communication systems, adding to the chaos. Even within response agencies, there were separate units with separate missions and varying levels of expertise. While there was an immediate surplus of manpower on the scene with equipment at their disposal almost immediately, there was no established management in place to make sure the resources were in the right place at the right time.

2. Command and Coordination. Includes Incident Command and addresses leadership roles, processes, and recommended organizational structures for incident management at the operational and incident support levels and designates how these structures interact to manage incidents effectively and efficiently.

An old sports adage relates to a football coach who claimed to have two interchangeable starting quarterbacks. "If you have two quarterbacks," the saying goes, "you have none." This applies to incident management as well. The 9/11 attacks involved multiple jurisdictions and multiple response agencies. In addition to police and firefighters, doctors, and EMS personnel, the U.S. Coast Guard and other maritime assets, construction workers and debris-removal crews, and civilians just seeking to help all descended on "the Pile." The multiple disparate operations intersecting within the same 14.6 acres in Lower Manhattan in combination with ingress/egress routes severely limited by the density of structures packed into the area created chaos. Leadership roles and areas of operation had to be clearly defined and established. The Unified Area Command was established for deconfliction and safety purposes. The NYPD was given responsibility for immediate crisis response, public safety, and securing of the WTC complex perimeter. The FDNY would continue to conduct search and rescue efforts, followed by the grim reality of months of recovery operations. The NYPD and FDNY coordinated directly with the New York City Office of Emergency Management (OEM), which had been formed in 1996.[5] The FBI assumed the lead investigatory role for the 9/11 attacks.

3. Communications and Information Management. Highlights systems and methods that help to ensure that incident personnel and other decision makers have the means and information they need to make and communicate decisions.[6]

These foundational management concepts provide the core for a comprehensive and systematic nationwide approach to incident management, including the command and coordination of incidents, as well as resource and information management.

Next, we introduce fourteen management principles to assist Incident Commanders in ensuring effective resource management, command and coordination, and

NIMS 14 MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES	NIMS MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS		
	Resource Management	Command & Coordination	Communication & Information Management
(P1) Common Terminology	X	X	X
(P2) Modular Organization		X	X
(P3) Management by Objectives		X	X
(P4) Incident Action Planning	X	X	X
(P5) Manageable Span of Control		X	
(P6) Incident Facilities & Locations	X	X	
(P7) Comprehensive Resource Management	X	X	X
(P8) Integrated Communications	X	X	X
(P9) Establishment & Transfer of Command		X	X
(P10) Unified Command		X	X
(P11) Chain of Command & Unity of Command		X	
(P12) Accountability	X	X	X
(P13) Dispatch & Deployment	X	X	X
(P14) Information & Intelligence Management		X	X

FIGURE 22.1. NIMS Management Matrix

communication and information management throughout the crisis. Figure 22.1 shows the management principles and how they map across the three management concepts. Using these management principles, NIMS is scalable and adaptable to all incidents regardless of size, complexity, or scope.

NIMS MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Common Terminology (P1). NIMS establishes common terminology that allows all incident management and support organizations to work together across a wide variety of functions and diverse scenarios.[7] This common terminology covers major functions and functional units with incident responsibilities that are clearly named and defined. Terminology for incident organizational elements is standard and consistent. It provides resource descriptions including personnel, equipment, teams, and facilities, which are all given common names and are typed to help avoid confusion and to enhance interoperability. Whereas one agency may refer to a high-ranking sworn command officer as "senior staff," for instance, that term may include nonsworn managers in another agency. This would be an important difference when assigning responsibilities that would involve specific authority. NIMS also standardizes terminology for incident facilities using common designations. Applying this management principle enables Incident Commanders to apply standardization across the incident response. Common terminology is generally applied before the incident in order to be effective.

The NYPD has its own set of codes and radio shorthand. A 10-13 in NYPD radio parlance (officer down and in need of assistance) is different from the FBI's 10-13 (unit requests assistance)—not so slight a difference. Differences in terminology between the

fire and police departments can be even more stark. Confusion can be mitigated a bit—but never entirely alleviated—by training and by affording seats on federal task forces to crisis response (police agencies) and consequence management entities (fire departments) from the local area.

Modular Organization (P2). Incident Command System (ICS) and Emergency Operations Center (EOC) structures are developed in modules based on the incident's size, complexity, and hazard level. Responsibility for establishing and expanding ICS scope and EOC teams ultimately rests with the Incident Commander or unified command and EOC Director. In general, responsibility for the functions that subordinates perform defaults to the next higher supervisory position until the supervisor delegates those responsibilities. As incident complexity increases, the need for expansion exists as additional responsibilities are delegated to subordinate supervisors by the Incident Commander, Unified Commander, and EOC Director. By modularizing the organization, the Incident Commander gains flexibility in responses. Ideally, the modularity of the organization could be discussed in training sessions before the incident happens, but more often this is something applied during the incident response.

Management by Objectives (P3). The Incident Commander or unified command is responsible for establishing objectives that drive all incident operations. This includes establishing specific and measurable objectives, as well as identifying strategies, tactics, tasks, and other activities necessary to achieve the objectives. They are also responsible for developing and issuing assignments, plans, procedures, and protocols for the incident management functional elements necessary to accomplish the identified tasks. Finally, it is critical for the Incident Commander or unified command to document all results against the identified objectives to measure performance, facilitate corrective actions, and assist in the development of incident objectives for a subsequent operational period. The level to which these responsibilities are delegated, while still maintaining final approval, is dependent upon the nature, size, and scope of the incident. Management by objectives allows the organization to maintain a unity of effort and let everyone know the objectives for the incident response. While general objectives can be developed in training, this is largely applied during an incident but can occur both before and after the incident.

The 9/11 Commission highlighted issues related to the reactive posture of the FBI's approach to dismantling and disrupting terror plots. The report described FBI efforts as "case-specific, decentralized, and geared toward prosecution."[8] After-the-fact investigations of major terrorist attacks designed to maximize prosecutions left the agency less then nimble in the arena of preventing—as well as responding to or mitigating—terror attacks. Incident Command is no doubt a reactive pursuit. Yet, if planned for, trained, and coordinated throughout, the NIMS allows incidents to be managed by objectives—specific, clearly defined, purpose-driven, and achievable objectives.

Incident Action Planning (P4). Incident action plans (IAPs) guide incident management activities. They represent a concise and coherent means of capturing and

communicating objectives, tactics, and assignments for incident activities. The complexity of the incident will determine the need and scope of written plans. Not all incidents require a written plan. Smaller-scale, short-term incidents can remain functional and efficient without a written plan. As an incident becomes more complex, involves a multijurisdictional effort, or extends beyond a single operational period, it becomes more important to create a written IAP to maintain unity of effort, as well as to help ensure an effective, efficient, and safe operation. This principle is generally applied during the incident but often continues beyond the incident; for example, recovery of assets from the incident location and preparing budget requests for actions during the incident.

Manageable Span of Control (P5). By maintaining an appropriate span of control, managers can ensure an effective and efficient incident management operation. A manageable span of control affords managers the ability to direct, supervise, and communicate with subordinates and to manage the resources under their control. The size, scope, and nature of the incident will influence span of control, as will the experience of supervisors and subordinates. Maintaining a manageable span of control enables the Incident Commander and subordinates to avoid being overwhelmed by information or to have control of more units than they can handle, but it also empowers subordinate leaders to show leadership and enable flexibility in their response to an incident. The determination of the span of control is typically discussed during an incident.

New York City absorbed the brunt of the 9/11 attacks with regard to human casualties and property destruction. Throughout the city's WTC response, a reliance on individual organizational structure within response agencies was paramount to swift achievement of objectives. In order to ensure no critical responsibility lacked an engaged and focused oversight entity, senior officials relied on mid-management-level leadership for day-to-day operations. Adherence to agency structure was essential. With approximately 11,000 FDNY firefighters, 35,000 uniformed police in the NYPD, and some 1,000 FBI agents involved, no single Incident Commander (even within each agency) could oversee everything.

Incident Facilities and Locations (P6). Depending on the location, nature, complexity, and size of the incident, the Incident Commander, unified command, and/or EOC Director will establish support facilities for a variety of purposes. These facilities may include but are not limited to the incident command post (ICP), staging areas, distribution points, casualty triage areas, media and information staging, and emergency shelters. Determining the incident locations is an important task, and while some staging can be done prior to the incident in training or preparation, much of this is determined during the incident. Thorough knowledge of facilities and locations throughout the Incident Commander's span allows for unity of effort and flexibility if a situation changes. Subordinate units know important locations if egress or access to their location is denied before the incident, when possible, but such information may often become known during the incident.

While the FBI has considerable resources—a benefit of being a federal agency—they are scattered across the globe. The New York field office is the bureau's largest and is known

as the flagship office because it houses one-tenth of the entire special agent population and a large support staff. Needing to relocate some two thousand employees near Ground Zero but far enough away so as not to impede ongoing rescue and recovery efforts, senior FBI leaders in New York City and at FBI headquarters decided to leverage local relationships. The leadership team at the *Intrepid* Sea, Air & Space Museum, located at Pier 86, West 46th Street on the west side of Manhattan, agreed to close the former aircraft carrier and tourist attraction to the public and offered it to FBI for its 9/11 ICP. The secure site offered land, sea, and air access and handled more than half a million telephonic leads, serving as aggregation location for strategic intelligence.[9]

Comprehensive Resource Management (P7). Maintaining an accurate and up-to-date inventory of all resources is an essential component of incident management. Resources include currently or readily available personnel, equipment, supplies, and facilities. Good to develop before the incident but need to be kept up to date during the incident and reviewed after the incident. This ensures the appropriate equipment is on hand when it's needed and allows for flexibility if the mission of a subordinate unit has to shift dramatically; they should know what materials they have on hand to accomplish the new mission or what they need to ask for from leadership.

Integrated Communications (P8). Integrated communications provide and maintain contact among and between all incident resources, enable connectivity between various levels of government, achieve situational awareness, and facilitate information sharing. Planning, both in advance of and during an incident, addresses the equipment, systems, and protocols necessary to achieve integrated voice and data communications. This critical leadership component at the incident level and in the EOC facilitates effective communication through the development of a common communication plan, interoperable communications processes, and systems that include voice and data links. Integrated communications enables flexibility to respond as the situation changes and lets Incident Command know new information as soon as it is observed. Though this is generally addressed during training, it is applied and refined during incidents as previously unplanned units are added to the operation. It can also be emphasized after the incident in follow-up missions or after-action reviews.

The 9/11 Commission's report noted glaring communications failures at the WTC. After the South Tower collapsed there were manifest difficulties in conveying evacuation instructions to firefighters in the North Tower because radio effectiveness was reduced in the high-rise environment, the tactical frequency was overwhelmed by traffic and call volume, and some firefighters were on the wrong radio frequency or had no radio at all. This was not the case with the smaller response elements from the NYPD's Emergency Services Unit (ESU). NYPD-ESU command positioned their command post at the intersection of Church and Vesey Streets, out from underneath the shadows of the Trade Towers. The 9/11 Commission's report noted that ESU command was better able to communicate evacuation orders to the unit's members located in the WTC lobbies—critical retrograde

information that firefighters ascending the North Tower never received from their command centers.[10]

Establishment and Transfer of Command (P9). The Incident Commander or unified command must clearly establish the command function at the beginning of an incident. The jurisdiction or organization with primary responsibility for the incident designates the individual at the scene responsible for establishing command and the protocol for transferring command. When command transfers, the transfer process should include a comprehensive briefing that addresses all critical information needed for continuing safe and effective operations. Notification of all personnel involved in the incident of the transfer of command is essential. Designation of command and knowledge of transfer of the command ensure unity of effort. If the need arises, this commonly applies during the incident.

Unified Command (P10). When no single jurisdiction, agency, or organization has primary authority and/or the resources to manage an incident on its own, unified command may be established. In unified command there is no one "commander." Instead, the unified command manages the incident by jointly approved objectives. Unified command does not affect individual agency authority, responsibility, or accountability, but it does give all involved agencies the ability to set aside issues such as overlapping and competing authorities, jurisdictional boundaries, and resource ownership to focus on establishing clear priorities and objectives for the incident. The joint effort allows the unified command to effectively allocate resources regardless of ownership or location. This ensures unity of effort of the incident and should be addressed during the incident.

Unified command is the only way to manage an incident the size, scope, and magnitude of the 9/11 attacks in New York City. The city is one of the few urban areas with the resources and expertise to confront most crisis events without federal assistance, and sometimes offers help outside its jurisdiction. Immediately following the October 2000 attack on the USS *Cole*, a U.S. Navy warship, in the Gulf of Aden, the NYPD dispatched officers who were assigned to the FBI-NYO's Joint Terrorist Task Force (JTTF) to Yemen as part of the FBI's team of investigators. Gestures like this—inclusion of local police officers in an investigation into a terror plot that had not targeted New York City—helped ameliorate some of the professional conflicts and fights over turf that popped up during the response to 9/11. This type of cooperation and collegiality leads to more easily established jointly approved objectives and minimizes battles between competing authorities. Leveraging prior relationships—such as the one earned during the *Cole* investigation—and providing resources to agencies in need helps fosters trust and builds a working relationship that allows unified command to flourish and work seamlessly, as it did on 9/11.

Chain of Command and Unity of Command (P11). Establishing a clear chain of command and unity of command clarifies reporting relationships and reduces confusion caused by conflicting directives. Additionally, it allows leadership at all levels to effectively manage personnel under their direct supervision. Related to manageable span of

control and unified command but more specific in ensuring that each element knows who it reports to and who reports to it. This provides unity of effort to the incident at all levels. Due to the unpredictability of units responding to incidents, and their current chains of command, this is often addressed during the incident.

Accountability (P12). Incident personnel must adhere to principles of accountability during an incident to ensure maximum efficiency and effectiveness. This includes incident action planning, personal responsibility, resource tracking, chain of command, and unity of control. Accountability is most emphasized during the incident but is discussed in post-incident evaluations.

Dispatch and Deployment (P13). Resources should be deployed only when the appropriate authorities request them, and they should be dispatched through established resource management systems. Separate from comprehensive resource management, this speaks more to the control over disbursing the equipment or resources only to where they are needed. This is largely practiced during the incident but can also come into play after the incident in the recovery phase. This allows for the flexibility of making sure the resources are put the best use for the mission at hand.

Information and Intelligence Management (P14). Information and intelligence management includes identifying essential elements of information to ensure personnel gather the most accurate and appropriate data, translate it into useful information, and communicate it to appropriate personnel. To accomplish this, the incident management organization must establish a process for gathering, analyzing, assessing, sharing, and managing incident-related information and intelligence. This enables both flexibility and unity of effort and should be applied in training before the incident, during an incident, and after the incident.

THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF INCIDENT COMMAND

The ICS operates within the framework of NIMS, which provides the comprehensive philosophy and framework for its implementation and use. It allows for a variety of command structures that are flexible based on the size, scope, and nature of the incident. Incident Command is responsible for the overall management of the incident. Although ICS is not a "one size fits all" solution, there are five major functional areas that are mandatory to effectively address all incidents: Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration. These essential functional areas are the backbone of your incident response. As you structure your ICS, keep in mind that this "hub" is the foundation on which all your activities are coordinated. As a result, give careful consideration to staffing each area with strong, competent leaders.

As applied to information and case management during the FBI's 9/11 investigation, the FBI relied on a computerized case management system that was still in its infancy. The FBI as an institution was renowned for its progressive and cutting-edge reliance on the latest law enforcement strategies (latent fingerprint collection, use of wiretapping, etc.).

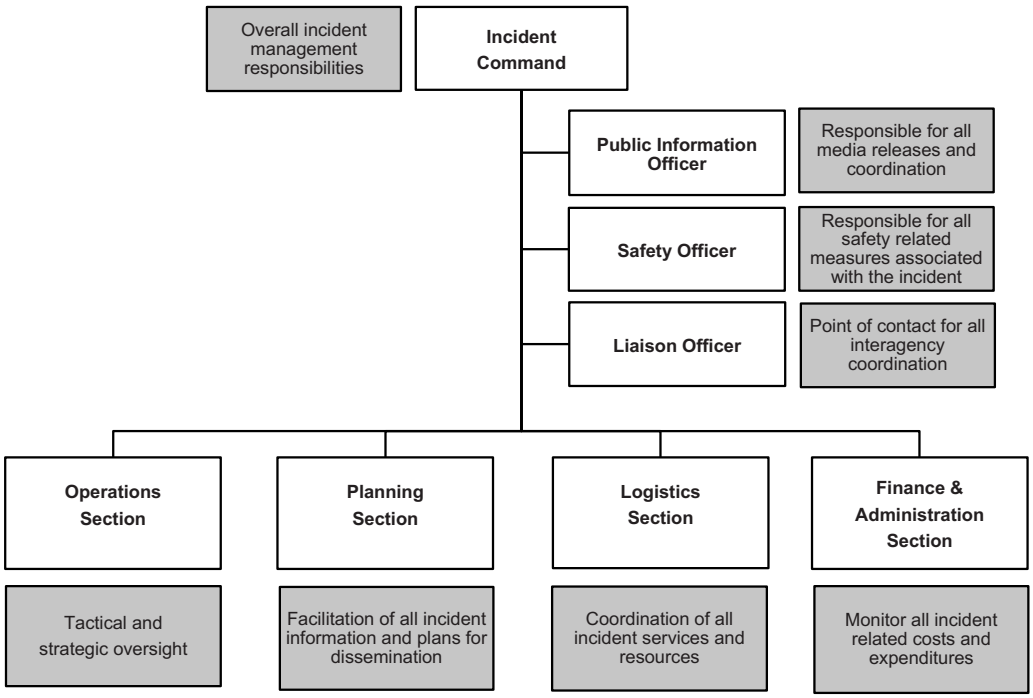
Overall incident management responsibilities
Incident Command
Public Information Officer
Responsible for all media releases and coordination
Safety Officer
Responsible for all safety related measures associated with the incident
Liaison Officer
Point of contact for all interagency coordination
Operations Section
Planning Section
Logistics Section
Finance & Administration Section
Tactical and strategic oversight
Facilitation of all incident information and plans for dissemination
Coordination of all incident services and resources
Monitor all incident related costs and expenditures

FIGURE 22.2. The Major Functional Areas of Incident Command

Yet it remained solidly resistant to emergent computer technologies almost a decade after most police agencies had adopted them. The tradition-laden bureau much preferred outdated information collection processes such as typewritten documents deposited in case files and then aggregated in rotary cabinets. While this staid reliance on paper was fading during the late 1990s, the FBI was still relying on first-generation software in 2001; 9/11 forced its hand.

Command

The most common command functions come from a single Incident Commander or from a unified command structure. The single Incident Commander model is typically utilized when an incident occurs within a single jurisdiction and without the presence of functional overlaps. In this situation, the appropriate jurisdictional authority would designate a single Incident Commander who has overall incident management responsibilities (see figure 22.2). This model can also be incorporated in situations in which incident management crosses jurisdictional and/or functional agency boundaries but the jurisdictions mutually agree to designate a single Incident Commander who maintains all incident management responsibilities. An example of this would be a highly publicized civic event in a suburban community with limited resources. In that situation, the smaller suburban jurisdiction might maintain and appoint, through mutual agreement, a single Incident Commander from that jurisdiction while the adjoining major

metropolitan jurisdictional agency provided significant personnel, equipment, and support resources. Although organization and coordination efforts would involve input from all entities, the ultimate incident management responsibilities would fall on the single Incident Commander.

A unified command approach is generally utilized when a multiagency response is necessary but more than one of the agencies has jurisdictional authority. Under those circumstances, the unified command structure allows for a collaborative approach under which each agency has management representation. A single incident action plan is established that would include a set of common objectives and agreed upon strategies. The unified command structure does not change or alter any ICS operations. Its purpose and strength lie in its effective communication and decision-making authority for all agencies involved in the incident response. A general example of a situation that would likely utilize a unified command approach would be a major explosion occurring within a densely populated urban area. In this event, the initial unified command would likely include the jurisdictional fire department, law enforcement, and public works managers since all would play major roles at the onset of the incident. The number of those involved in unified command could expand if the incident escalated or the assessment of resources deemed it appropriate. The fire department would initially be responsible for fire suppression and rescue. The police department's role would include scene security, rescue, and investigation. The public works representative might have utility coordination responsibilities as well as building integrity involvement.

Another less common approach involves area command. An area command structure can be utilized in situations where multiple ICS incidents are being managed by multiple ICS agencies. Although a less common approach than a single Incident Commander or unified command, the area command strategy may be considered in a situation where there is a public health event, such as a major chemical leak occurring on a windy day and dispersing dangerous and toxic fumes across a large area. Area command may be more effective in deploying resources across that geographical space, particularly if significantly different resources are needed in different parts of the widely dispersed areas. The area command approach may provide important management oversight for different resources under these circumstances.

In the ICS, there are several key staff that report directly to the Incident Commander or unified command. This staff includes the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, and the Liaison Officer (see figure 22.2).[11] The PIO is responsible for the development of accurate, accessible, and timely information for use in press briefings; providing news releases with the approval of the Incident Commander or unified command; monitoring media information that may be useful in incident planning; and ensuring that all media exchanges follow designated protocols. The PIO should also understand effective communication in the current social media environment and utilize those platforms when appropriate. The Safety Officer is responsible for identifying, mitigating, and preventing

hazardous situations and unsafe acts, ensuring that safety messages are disseminated to personnel involved in the incident, and reviewing medical protocols and plans. The Liaison Officer is the point of contact for all agencies participating in the incident response. The Liaison Officer is responsible for the coordination of interagency agreements and must monitor incident operations to identify and potential interagency or interorganizational conflicts.

Operations

Incident operations responsibilities will vary depending on the nature, size, and scope of the incident. As a result, operations can be organized and executed in a variety of ways. The Incident Commander or unified command will appoint an Operations Section Chief based on the incident priorities. The Operations Section Chief will ultimately be responsible for tactical and strategic operations, coordination of the command objectives, and the organization and direction of all available resources.

Planning

The Planning section collects and evaluates information as it becomes available and disseminates it to the command staff. This is an important component for the development of an action plan to accomplish the objectives. The primary responsibilities of the Planning section include facilitating incident planning meetings and the incident action planning process; preparing status reports including those related to assigned resources; collecting all incident documents; and planning for a safe, orderly, and efficient demobilization of incident resources.

Although the Planning staff are responsible for gathering and analyzing all operational information, for incidents that involve intensive intelligence gathering and investigative activities, the Incident Commander or unified command may choose to create an additional Intelligence/Investigations section. The purpose of this Intelligence/Investigations section is to conduct all comprehensive investigations and ensure that all intelligence information is properly managed and disseminated. Examples of incidents that would likely incorporate an Intelligence/Investigations section would be the Boston bombing incident in 2013 and the Las Vegas shooting in 2017. Incidents such as these require a significant investigative response, including an intelligence component involving multijurisdictional information and resources.

Logistics

The Logistics section provides service and support to Incident Command. Staff in this section handle the coordination of all services and resources related to the incident response including personnel, facilities, equipment, communications and IT support, transportation, food, and medical services for incident personnel. The Logistics staff also coordinate volunteer services such as the Salvation Army and Red Cross.

Finance/Administration

The staff assigned to the Finance/Administration section monitors all costs related to the incident. The accounting of funds used during the incident response includes a procurement time recording cost analysis, leases, vendor contracts, and overall incident costs. The functions of the Finance/Administration staff can become very complex for large incidents that utilize multijurisdictional agencies and involve multiple funding sources.

Utilizing an ICS strategy for a critical incident and incorporating the essential management principles will provide a systematic approach and significantly increase the likelihood of achieving operational goals. We have seen success and failure throughout the history of Incident Command.

PRE-INCIDENT, DURING-INCIDENT, AND POST-INCIDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

There are three phases that lead to a successful utilization of Incident Command. You must prepare for an event (Pre-incident), effectively deploy Incident Command (During-Incident), and evaluate your response afterward (Post-incident). Each phase must be comprehensively implemented to contribute to the overall strategy. It is important to understand that Incident Command is not just a response mechanism, but can also be effective when incorporated as a pro-active measure. Situations in which Incident Command can be utilized as an effective strategy include a wide range of potential events such as natural disasters, severe weather, fire and rescue, incidents of terrorism, health crises, hazardous materials, civil unrest, mass shootings, sporting and concert venues, preplanned public events, and any other situation in which an organized safety presence or response is beneficial.

Pre-incident

Proactively preparing for your deployment of an organized command response to an incident or event is key. You must anticipate dangers, threats, and resource needs to be effective. Understand that by preparing you are attempting to avoid inherent power struggles, miscommunication, duplication of efforts, and a less than effective approach to a volatile situation.

The following are recommended items for consideration when preparing your response to an event.

Pre-incident Checklist:

- Meet with key Incident Command stakeholders (P2, P3, P4)
  - Police, fire, medical, 911 communications, emergency managers, public works and utilities, transportation, government officials, and any other known essential leaders.
- Meet with key community stakeholders (P4)
  - Do you have a large-scale business or operation that will be impacted by major events?

- Create interagency agreements for implementation of Incident Command (P4)
- Develop an emergency contact list (P2, P4)
  - This should include a primary and a secondary contact from each responding organization. They will in turn mobilize their resources.
  - Ensure that the list is continuously updated, current, and distributed to essential personnel.
- Determine your general response priorities, strategies, and tactics (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7)
  - Factor into this a mobilization timeline and target.
- Compile a comprehensive list of available resources (P1, P6, P7)
  - This includes human, physical, monetary, technological, transportation, and structural components. These resources will come from both public and private-sector entities.
- Acquire all important infrastructure maps and schematics (P4, P6, P7)
  - Determine a safe, logical, and accessible storage location.
- Develop an interagency communication plan (P8, P14)
  - This is imperative because communication is the most commonly noted failure in incident response. Your plan should include emergency contact information for key players.
- Develop a comprehensive media plan (P4, P14)
  - Proactively utilizing the media to disseminate information or to gain additional intelligence information is an important component. The during-incident strategy for this will vary according to the nature, size, and scope of the incident.
  - Remember that there are a variety of media sources and venues to consider, including TV, radio, print, and different social media platforms.
  - Releases should be distributed to *all* local TV, radio, and print media outlets. Do not ignore specific outlets due to history or biases.
  - It is critical that all media releases are clear and consistent to avoid confusion and misinformation.
- Create ICS Manual (P1, P4)
  - Includes all agreed-upon standard operating procedures.
- Participate in joint, multiagency training (P2, P3, P4)
  - You must train, incorporating as many practical and "real life" circumstances as possible.

- Conduct post-training evaluations (P2, P3, P4)
  - This will help identify needs. Your plan is a living document that will continue to evolve.
- Conduct a yearly inventory of resources to ensure availability and functionality (P7)
  - Too often, items and personnel listed as resources should an incident occur no longer exist or no longer meet the needs of the plan. Individuals may no longer be the point of contact or available.
  - If possible, create an Incident Commander deployment kit to include: office supplies, contact lists, interagency agreements, ICS Manuals and forms, power cables and chargers, and any other resources that may be initially needed and immediately accessible for emergency deployment.

Additional Pre-incident Considerations:

- Understand that your goal is to develop a common approach that can be applied to all situations and events. Your approach must be scalable depending on the nature, size, and extent of the resources needed.
- No plan or preparation can count for everything that occurs during an incident, particularly at the onset. You must expect to make immediate decisions to change directions and adjust to the evolving circumstances.
- Never lose sight of your objectives. In the stress of the moment, stay focused, directed, and LEAD.
- Identify situations and events common to your community in which utilizing an Incident Command strategy would be beneficial.
- Regular participation, evaluation, and updates are critical to success. You can't leave this on the shelf for an extended period and expect your emergency response to be efficient and effective.

During-Incident

Your response to a major event must be coordinated and comprehensive to be effective. Each event is unique and will pose a variety of different challenges. With that said, you must rely on your Pre-incident actions and follow all During-Incident protocols. These processes have been put in place to allow you to successfully implement your ICS in any environment, regardless of nature, size, or scope.

The following are recommended items for consideration upon initial notification that that Incident Command is being deployed to an event. Remember, this could be a preplanned deployment of Incident Command to a scheduled event, which would be different than an emergency notification. In either event, the response checklist would remain the same.

During-Incident Checklist:

- Determine the nature, size, and scope of the incident (P3)
  - This preassessment information should be acquired prior to arriving at the scene.
  - Attempt to determine injuries, fatalities, and the threat to the uninjured.
  - Assess potential threats to responders.
- Initiate notifications in accordance with contingency plans (P2, P4, P9)
  - It is recommended that this action be delegated, as your initial assessment of the situation will be ongoing as you respond.
- Notify your agency leadership (P4, P11, P14)
  - It is important to keep agency leaders in your chain of command apprised of the situation if they are not directly involved in the incident response. Their guidance may affect your ability to command the situation.
- Formulate a plan (P4, P5, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14)
  - After your initial assessment, establish initial incident priorities and objectives.
  - Set the plan in motion in response to the crisis.
  - You must MAKE DECISIONS in a timely and responsible manner.
- Determine location for incident command center (P6, P8)
  - Take into consideration accessibility, proximity to danger, and available infrastructure.
  - The location can be a building, mobile command center (if available), or any other workspace that provides a safe and effective work environment.
- Assign essential support personnel (P2, P5, P7, P11)
  - This includes the Public Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer, and the commanders for the Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration sections.
  - Ensure that all staff are aware of the operation's objectives and that they clearly understand their roles and responsibilities.
  - Assign a note taker to remain with you throughout the incident. This person should document all decisions and actions.
- Upon arrival, verify initial information received (P14)
  - Confirm danger, threats, and casualties.
  - Identify factors that may cause the incident to escalate.
- Provide direction to minimize risk to responders and public (P12, P13)

- Determine perimeter for scene management (P6, P14)
  - Considerations should include safety of the public, perimeter security and management, and crime scene contamination (if applicable).
  - Remember that as the size and scope of the incident changes, the size of your perimeter should be reevaluated.
- Establish contact with medical staff and facilities (P6, P12, P14)
  - In addition to scene security and control, one of the initial activities of first responders is to tend to the injured. It is likely that victims have already been treated and/or transported to medical facilities prior to staging the incident command center.
  - Providing security support at medical facilities may be necessary, depending on the nature and scope of the event.
- Determine location and setup media staging area (P6, P13)
  - Delegate to PIO with specific instructions.
  - The nature, size, and scope of the incident will determine the location.
- Conduct initial briefing after all essential command personnel arrive (P12, P13, P14)
  - The incident will remain fluid, so be prepared to provide frequent updates.
- Consider tactical needs (P7, P14)
  - Tactical resources should be staged and immediately available for deployment based on your analysis of the incident.
- Communicate priorities and objectives to responders (P12, P13, P14)
  - Update this information as the situation changes.
- Evaluate span of control and reorganize operation if necessary (P5, P7)
  - Make sure that you organize personnel into manageable work units.
- Coordinate equipment checkout (P7, P13)
  - A systematic approach to equipment checkout will ensure an accurate assessment of available equipment and resources.
- Deploy on-scene resources (P7, P13, P14)
  - Resources should be utilized in the most efficient and effective manner and in line with priorities and to address objectives.
- Coordinate investigative resources (P7, P13, P14)
  - Based on the nature of the event, investigators and crime scene personnel should be deployed.

  - Remember that scene safety and security are priorities, although crime scene protection and evidence collection are essential components.
  - You must assign someone to oversee the investigative functions to maintain balance.
- Evaluate support requirements (P7)
  - Determine needs and acquire additional support resources if necessary.
- Attempt to determine probable incident duration (P14)
  - This should be done on a regular basis because it impacts resources.
  - Develop a plan for personnel relief if it is a prolonged incident.
- Prepare media release (P8, P14)
  - You should consider providing regular media updates to minimize misinformation.
  - If there is an adversary in the event, they may have media access, so be mindful of information regarding strategy, intelligence, and tactics.
- Ensure that situational and intelligence briefings are ongoing (P14)
  - Information sharing and communication at this stage are critical for decision making.
- Develop a plan for the transfer of command or incident resolution (P9, P12, P14)
  - As you evaluate the progress of the response, forward thinking should include a plan for either the resolution of the incident or a seamless transfer of command and authority.
- Make the decision to end Incident Command (P3, P12, P14)
  - Brief leadership on your recommendation to end Incident Command, your reasoning behind that decision, and any potential impacts that this may have.
  - Their feedback and input are important in your decision process.
- Communicate incident resolution to command and personnel (P12, P13, P14)
  - After verification of a safe and secure scene, communicate "next steps" to all personnel.
  - Emphasize that personnel should not leave their assigned posts until officially dismissed by command.

Additional During-Incident Considerations:

- You must anticipate the unexpected and make immediate decisions to respond to the change.
- Make sure that you have a comprehensive understanding of all event information prior to declaring the incident resolved.
- Once the incident is successfully resolved, be sure to retain all essential staff for Post-incident responsibilities.

Post-incident

Now that the incident has been resolved, you must take steps to ensure a safe and effective withdrawal of resources. This should be an organized, collaborative undertaking. There are many command considerations when resources and personnel demobilize. When the incident involves a multiagency response, personnel often leave the scene and return to their jurisdictions without coordinating their withdrawal with Incident Command. This poses a number of problems and is an inefficient way to end the event response.

The following are recommended items for consideration when ending an incident response.

Post-incident Checklist:

- Identify resources and personnel ready for demobilization and communicate plans (P7, P13, P14)
  - You should incrementally demobilize personnel based on their assignments.
  - Perimeter security are generally the last to be released, after the incident command center has been relinquished.
- Notify all key stakeholders of incident resolution (P12, P13, P14)
  - This would include police, fire, medical, 911 communications, emergency managers, public works and utilities, transportation, government officials, and other essential community and business leaders.
  - Advise your agency leaders, if they are not directly involved in the incident, of the decision to end the incident, including your reasoning and potential impacts.
- Prepare and conduct media releases (P8, P14)
  - This will likely involve a press conference.
  - Provide as many details as appropriate while maintaining the integrity of any ongoing criminal investigations.
  - An additional press release may be necessary after all final reports have been analyzed.
- Provide clear expectations and instructions for key staff including Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration sections (P8, P12, P13)
  - Even though their responsibilities are different, collaboration is essential for post-incident actions and reports.
- Coordinate cleanup efforts (P12, P13)
  - In many instances, physical remnants of the event will remain on-scene and cleanup efforts will be necessary.
- Equipment check-in (P7)
  - Direct Logistics staff.

- Ensure that all equipment is inventoried and accounted for.
- Check to ensure that equipment is in working order and make any necessary recommendations for replacement or repairs.
- Conduct final inventory to be used for final expenditure report and replenishing supplies.

- Collection of reports (P8, P12, P14)
  - Planning section staff should ensure that all incident-related reports are collected, compiled, and available for distribution.
- Debriefing meetings (P3, P4, P12, P14)
  - An initial debriefing meeting should occur with all key commanders involved in the incident.
  - Additional debriefing meetings should occur after the fact with all first-line and mid-level supervisors involved in the incident. These individuals should meet with their respective staff, if reasonable, prior to this debriefing to gather feedback and operation information.
- Offer personnel critical incident stress management resources (P4, P12, P14)
  - Responding personnel will react differently to the stressors of the incident. You should take their after-incident well-being seriously.
- Final expenditure report (P4, P7, P12, P14)
  - Finance/Administration staff should compile a final expenditure report for distribution to all agencies/organizations involved in the incident.
  - This report can be used as a guide for future budgets.
- After-action reviews (P3, P4, P12, P14)
  - In accordance with interagency agreements, incident after-action reviews should be conducted by all personnel involved in the incident.
  - These after-action reviews will be used to improve future plans.
  - Share a summary of the after-action reviews and lessons learned with all participants.
- Final command meeting (P3, P4, P12, P14)
  - A final command meeting should be held after all agencies that were involved in the incident compile their final after-action reports.
- Planning meetings (P3, P4)
  - Additional planning meetings should occur after all event activities and documents are completed.

- The final evaluations will be presented.
- Recommendations will be considered for changes and revisions to the existing plans, training and equipment needs, and all other ICS-related issues.

Additional Post-incident Considerations:

- The nature, size, and scope of the incident will determine the magnitude of the Post-incident activities. With that said, even a brief and uneventful Incident Command deployment should follow all Post-incident protocols.
- To avoid making the same mistakes, agencies should meet as soon as reasonably possible after the conclusion of the event so necessary changes can be implemented. It is easy to procrastinate and delay these meetings, but you don't know when the next event will occur.
- Constructive criticism should be accepted regarding any interagency conflicts, power struggles, and incident decisions that were noted.

As we continue to see our nation in crisis during events such as riots in Minneapolis and Portland in 2021; an attack on the U.S. Capitol in 2021; and mass shootings in shopping malls, schools, and other public venues, our commitment to a collaborative approach to dealing with these incidents has never been more essential. Incident Command provides the foundation to systematically utilize our resources to keep our communities and country safe. The circumstances surrounding the deployment of an Incident Command response will always be different. As a result, Incident Commanders must remain flexible and adapt their decisions and resources to the moment. These checklists provide a general guide, but incident specifics may call for a modification of the checklist. The Incident Commander must be prepared and must make decisions that are directly in line with the objectives of the operation. The key is to maintain focus on the priorities of the incident and let that be the guide for where to prioritize command, logistics, and effort, understanding that other important issues may not get the attention they deserve. That is the nature of leading a critical incident response. Offering leadership through chaos also involves making mistakes. Accept that fact and learn from it. Trust your training, trust your personnel, and trust your experiences and judgment. This preparation and good organization of people and logistics, as well as the core components and the management principles of NIMS and ICS, will guide an effective and efficient response to any critical incident.

History tends to focus on the mistakes of past Incident Command operations. Although we may learn more from our mistakes than our successes, we must also give credit to the men and women who responded to the 9/11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and the countless other critical incidents that have occurred and will occur in our country. Their efforts to step up and attempt to lead under the most extreme circumstances have paved the way for future responses.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Incident Command System is only as valuable and effective as the people implementing it. As you utilize an ICS, keep in mind the following key points:

1. *Be prepared*. You must plan and train for the moment to be successful.
2. *Remain flexible*. Each incident will be unique; therefore, you must be flexible in your approach.
3. *Make decisions*. It is critical that you are a confident decision maker during times of crisis.
4. *Stay focused*. Always keep your objectives in sight to avoid a mismanaged response.
5. *Resources are key*. You are only as good as your resources, so utilize them in the most efficient and effective manner possible.
6. *Step up and lead*. Internal staff, external constituents, and the community are relying on you for direction and guidance during this critical time. Be a strong leader.

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CHAPTER 23

A Holistic Approach to Leading in Dangerous Situations

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THIS BOOK OFFERS A LOT TO DIGEST, but what should be patently clear is that dangerous contexts place unique psychological, physical, and social demands on leaders and organizations. To both survive and excel in such contexts we must diligently prepare ourselves and those in our charge by developing high levels of trustworthiness, psychological resilience, cohesion, and strong leader-follower partnerships. Given that the demands of the dangerous context impact all individuals, their relationships with the group, and the organization's resources and systems, a systems-based perspective is a logical foundation for fostering the holistic development to prepare for the unique challenges of leading and operating in dangerous contexts.

A systems approach provides leaders with an appreciation for how the unique challenges of leading in dangerous contexts influence the interdependencies between leaders, followers, their social relationships, and the organization. Also, a holistic developmental model that takes such a systems view provides leaders with a common operating framework to understand the impacts of dangerous contexts, a shared language with which to discuss development, and a set of common capacities needed in dangerous contexts to purposefully target for development. Figure 23.1 collects and integrates the insights from the other chapters in this book to introduce such a model to help guide leaders as they build their own and their organizations' capacity to lead in dangerous contexts.[1] Thus, while much of this book has provided a mix of pragmatic practitioner-oriented material with the emergent scholarship of leading in dangerous contexts, the purpose of this final chapter is to elevate you above that mix so that you might see how it all pieces together to form a mosaic of concepts that may be applied to developing individuals, groups, and organizations to face and thrive in dynamic dangerous contexts.

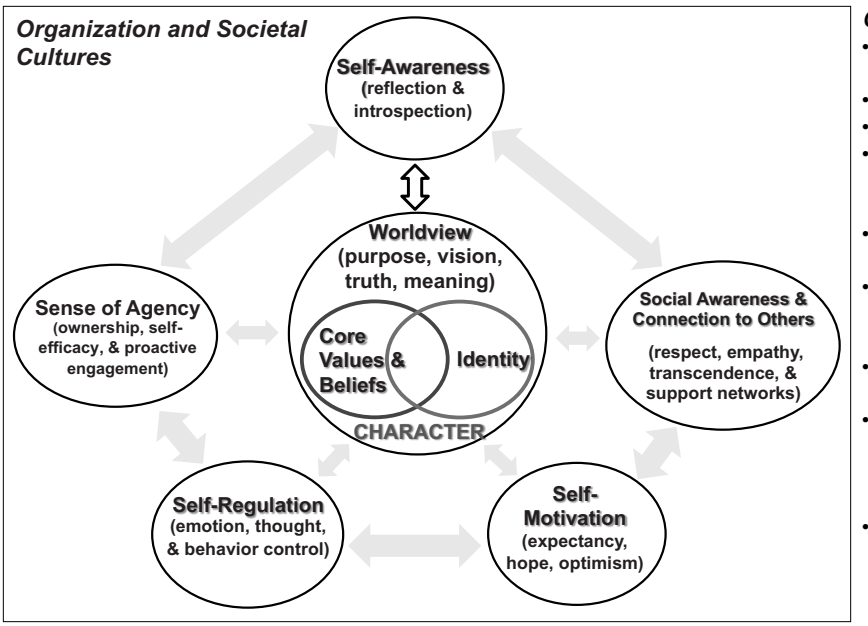

FIGURE 23.1. A Holistic Development Model for Dangerous Contexts Leaders and Organizations

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR DANGEROUS CONTEXT LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The model shown in figure 23.1 focuses on several interrelated psychological structures, capacities, traits, and skills—worldview (perspective), self-awareness, sense of agency, self-regulation, self-motivation, social awareness, and connection to others—that facilitate the development of leaders' and followers' capacities to operate in dangerous contexts. The model offers numerous processes and systems, such as planning and organizational learning processes, that can prepare the team for effective operations. The model also acknowledges the influences that memberships in various social groups—such as a unit, a profession, a society, and so on—have on the development of leaders and followers. The model is versatile in that the focal point for development can be the individual leader, a follower, or even a team/unit or organization. In sum, the key themes from the various chapters in this volume are populated in the model. The process of examining these themes through the model will provide leaders holistic insights into leader, leadership, and organization development. And, in keeping with a consistent theme throughout this book, the people selected to join your organization are the most important input to this model.

Worldview

An individual's worldview comprises that person's most central core values and beliefs concerning purpose and meaning in life, identity, truths, and visions for realizing his

or her full potential and purpose. The worldview is the foundation of who leaders and followers are, how they view and interpret events, and most important, how they act and make meaning from their experiences.[2] It is the lens that leaders use to observe, interpret, and make sense of life, events, and their own actions.[3] It influences attention, perceptions, thoughts, motivation, behavior, and meaning making and embodies the foundation of leaders' and followers' character. The development of team members' worldviews is important to promote ethical action, courage, managing stress, intuitive decision making, resilience, and meaning making; and to promote post-traumatic growth while limiting post-traumatic stress. Thus, worldview needs to be the central target of development in any program preparing leaders and followers to meet the psychological and social demands of operating in dangerous contexts. And it must be grounded within the culture and mores of their chosen profession.

A person develops a worldview by first gaining awareness of his or her components (e.g., core values and beliefs, assumptions about the world, identity, and so on) and the internal workings (e.g., how assumptions influence perceptions and behavior) of his/her worldview through a process of reflective thought. This may be done in a variety of ways ranging from formal education to life experiences that expose one to different ways of viewing and conceiving of the world. Exposure to these different perspectives may alter one's worldview or may reinforce it. Having a rich array of lenses through which to view the world facilitates reflection and introspection on one's own perspective, creates openness to learning from diverse views and ideas, and may allow for a less judgmental approach to differences among people.

Challenging and adverse experiences such as having a demanding job, experiencing tough training, being passed over for promotion, experiencing a death in the family, being injured on the job, confronting an ethical issue, or leading during a pandemic also expand one's worldview. Such experiences are important because they facilitate worldview development by expanding the established mental frameworks and models used to understand the world. When individuals cannot make sense of their experiences, feelings of disequilibrium or uneasiness often ensue. Humans have an innate drive toward equilibrium, so when they experience a shock to their system that tilts their understanding of something, they work hard to reestablish equilibrium by making meaning of what they just experienced.[4] Thus, experiences that push people out of their comfort zones or usual ways of viewing life also promote the development of a more complex worldview. Such experiences can challenge the person's values and beliefs, and this is particularly true for dangerous-context leaders.

Core Values, Self-Identity, and Character

One of the major themes of *Leadership in Dangerous Situations* is the importance of leaders' and followers' character for successfully leading and operating in dangerous environments. Character can be viewed as the extent to which one's core values are

integrated into one's self-identity and have a positive impact on self and others. The more leaders and followers define themselves by their core values, the more drive they will have to behave in accordance with those core values in all situations to maintain self-consistency.[5] Individuals with strong character use their values to define themselves; that is, they become their values. The core values of an individual who chooses to work in dangerous contexts tend to be aligned with their organization's values. Soldiers, for example, internalize the Army's seven values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. Being a person of character is an integral part of the identity of dangerous-context leaders and "warriors," defined here as leaders who take on tough challenges, place duty first, never accept defeat, never quit, and never leave a fallen comrade (commitment to teammates). Leaders who integrate the warrior ethos into their identity approach leading and living with a more proactive, resilient, and winning spirit.[6]

A leader's character provides the moral compass that guides decisions and behavior, especially when using, or restraining from using, lethal force. Followers draw courage and strength from leaders who model courage and composure in threatening conditions. Character is thus a motivational source for perseverance. When group members are physically, emotionally, and mentally fatigued, they look to their leader to summon the strength to continue the mission and accomplish it. Similarly, leaders who model good coping skills, based on being true to their own and the organization's values, positively influence followers' coping skills, which promotes resilience to adversity. Character also forms the foundation for leaders and followers to understand and make meaning out of their experiences. Furthermore, leaders and followers who model their organization's values are likely to earn a reputation as trustworthy, which facilitates the development of trust in others and enhances the ability to influence (lead).[7]

Finding purpose in serving is important in preparing leaders and followers to meet the psychological challenges of leading and operating in dangerous contexts. Purpose is a powerful motivational force for transcending self-interests and facing the risks of injury or death to serve others. Core values linked with a sense of purpose promote the strength of will to endure, bounce back from (resilience), and make meaning out of adverse or traumatic experiences. For instance, Adm. Jim Stockdale endured eight years of torture and indignities in a North Vietnam prisoner-of-war camp by believing he would get out (faith) and turning the experience into a defining event in his life (purpose).[8] Furthermore, getting members to rally around a common, worthy purpose influences the development of trust and task cohesion within teams and also facilitates the use of transformational leadership behaviors.

Leaders must also shape meaning in their organization. Shared meaning making within the group influences the worldviews of both leaders and followers. Exchanging perspectives provides information members use to evaluate their assumptions about the world, redefine truths, understand the larger purpose, gain insights into how values influence decisions

and behavior, and find the limits of their current ways of thinking. Leaders can proactively engage in shared meaning making by identifying the purpose of missions for followers, sharing rationale (leader's intent) for decisions (and how they align with the organization's core values), being transparent with information, and conducting an after-action review upon completion of each mission so that the team can discuss and learn from their experiences. Not everyone who serves in dangerous contexts shares the same degree of commitment. A seasoned mid-career veteran may derive a greater sense of purpose from working in dangerous contexts than a newcomer who has not completely been socialized and has not yet "bought in" to the organizational values, or struggles to make meaning of working in dangerous contexts. Thus, every engagement with group members is a chance for leaders to shape and strengthen their worldviews. Figure 23.2, located at the end of the chapter, outlines best practices for leaders shaping their own and followers' worldviews.

Self-Awareness

Families, schools, teams, and other social groups have a tremendous impact on shaping general worldviews. Leaders and followers transform these general worldviews into personalized perspectives through reflection and introspection. Through reflection on core values and beliefs, identity, purpose and meaning in life, and truths, an individual can begin to "customize" his or her worldview. Reflection also plays a significant role in the development of identity and the integration of core values into it—the formation of one's character. The ability to start to identify and assess identity, values, truths, purpose, and vision provides individuals with the autonomy to take charge of their development and to regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behavior.

Awareness of one's capabilities, core values, identity, purpose, mental models, and perceptions of truths about the world plays a key role in managing stress, promoting courageous actions, building resilience, enhancing perseverance, and mitigating post-traumatic stress symptoms. Self-awareness allows leaders to frame experiences and view them as challenges that have the purpose of increasing personal and team growth. Awareness of contextual variables and how they influence internal states lets individuals engage in proactive strategies to manage stress or harness additional motivational forces to adapt effectively. Also, a good sense of self influences ethical decisions and behavior and provides an individual with a firm foundation to interpret and make meaning out of experiences. This sense of self rubs off on others, too. A self-aware leader is authentic, which is important to developing relationships based on trust and engaging in higher-order leadership behaviors such as transformational, servant, and authentic leadership (see figure 23.2).

Sense of Agency

Agency entails leaders assuming control and responsibility for their actions and effective functioning. Leaders seek out opportunities for growth and ways to improve their effectiveness. They accept their shortfalls and realize they are the primary author of their

own actions. Agency is determined by the leaders' self-efficacy (confidence) and personal beliefs. Leaders who believe that they can positively influence their destiny will engage in proactive, purposeful actions to take advantage of opportunities to do so. Thus, the leaders' behavior is controlled internally, not dictated by environmental forces. Efficacy beliefs influence leaders' decisions (e.g., take the challenge or play it safe), how much effort they expend toward achieving a goal, the strength of will to persevere when confronted with obstacles and danger, self-enabling or self-hindering thought patterns, ability to adapt and cope with changing circumstances, and levels of stress. These beliefs also influence the leader's regulation of thought processes, emotions, and motivation.[9]

Leaders can enhance their sense of agency by becoming competent in their profession. Throughout this volume, competence has emerged as a primary factor in determining leader effectiveness. Realistic training that replicates the conditions of the dangerous context develops the skillsets—that is, decision making, technical and tactical knowledge, stress management and social skills—and mental models that raise members' self-efficacy beliefs. These beliefs have a synergistic effect by allowing leaders to apply various skillsets in adapting to situations. As leaders' competence grows, so does the diversity and breadth of their plans of action, as well as their adaptive capacity to adjust to uncertainty, all of which bolsters their self-efficacy and agency. Skilled leaders who doubt themselves can undermine their own performance. Thus, effective performance depends on both competence and one's belief in that competence.[10]

Physical courage is developed by placing leaders in increasingly threatening training situations (e.g., live-fire training exercises). Similarly, training exercises designed to place leaders in morally ambiguous situations like those they might experience in the real world or requiring them to incur risk to stand up for their group members or beliefs will assist in developing personal responsibility and moral courage. Each time the leader successfully demonstrates courageous behavior in the training setting or day-to-day work setting, efficacy beliefs deepen, as does agency.

Tough, realistic training is also used to develop stress management skills and resilience through practice. Self-efficacy beliefs play a key role in leaders accurately assessing their ability to meet the demands of dangerous situations and assist in managing stress. Training that introduces adversity helps develop leaders' coping and resilience strategies as well as their meaning-making abilities. Each time they successfully manage a tough challenge or setback, their efficacy beliefs and agency increase.

From a collective perspective, tough, realistic training facilitates the development of trust between group members, enhances team cohesion, increases group viability, builds team resilience, and, most important, enhances the team's perception of its efficacy. Collective efficacy (confidence in the team's capabilities to perform) lifts morale, assists in stress management, and facilitates the mitigation of post-traumatic stress symptoms.[11] Shared perceptions of efficacy beliefs are instrumental in a team's performance and resilience to adversity (see figure 23.2, on page 501).

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to monitor, understand, assess, and control one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior—the ability to lead the self.[12] Self-awareness and agency play significant roles in developing an individual's ability to self-regulate.[13] Leaders who can assess their mental models for accuracy and bias, understand the source of their emotions and how their thought patterns influence motivation and behavior, are empowered to implement measures to control them and start to master self-influence.[14] This ability to reflect on the causes and consequences of past patterns of thoughts, emotions, and behavior allows leaders to choose future patterns of thoughts and behaviors that align with their values, beliefs, and goals. Thus, self-regulation is a prerequisite to integrity, authentic and ethical leadership, and development as both a leader and a person.[15]

Self-regulation also influences leaders' and followers' abilities to maintain attention focus, perseverance to accomplish a task, and strength of will to behave in accordance with their own and the organization's values. The ability to monitor and regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior is a resource that can be developed through self-awareness and practice. An individual's self-regulation resource can also be depleted through overuse and fatigue.[16] Superb physical fitness, diet, disciplined sleep habits, and a reasonable work-life balance mitigate the rate of depletion of this scarce resource. Leaders and group members need to be aware when their self-regulation strength is depleted to the level where it is about to adversely influence judgment and behavior.

Self-regulation plays a pivotal role in developing leaders' psychological body armor. From an individual perspective, self-regulation influences leaders' ability to act courageously, behave morally and ethically, be resilient, manage stress, and make meaning. Regarding courage, leaders and followers use self-regulation to acknowledge the threats in the situation, control their emotions, and motivate themselves to take action to accomplish their duties despite placing themselves and others at grave risk. In terms of stress and resilience, leaders use regulation processes to frame perceptions of the situational demands (challenge versus threat), assess capabilities, and execute adaptive strategies for coping with the stress and accomplishing the mission.

Self-regulation gives leaders a sense of control over their thoughts, emotional reactions, and behavioral responses to adversity. The regulation process assists them in evaluating the cause of the event, developing plans to prevent similar events in the future, and, most important, responding adaptively to the event. Leaders use self-regulation to frame the event in a way that assists the meaning-making process. The ability to understand and control one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior promotes within leaders a sense of agency, optimism, and resilience.

Self-regulation is critical to effective decision making in high-stress and dynamic situations. Leaders must be able to control their own emotions, balance competing goals (e.g., accomplish the mission but also minimize danger to the team members), and manage their thoughts to make adaptive decisions. Self-regulation provides leaders with the ability

to remain calm and composed in dangerous and crisis situations. This skill is honed by decision making during realistic training and reflective thought.

Openness to learning is another important theme of this volume. Leaders' use their self-regulation abilities to open themselves to innovation by directing their attention and managing their thoughts as they are exposed to new ideas and perspectives. Self-regulation is especially important during in-process reviews and after-action reviews when leaders receive candid feedback from members and external stakeholders on areas they need to improve. Their ability to manage their emotions and be open to the feedback enhances their development and serves as a positive role model for their people.

In terms of the social perspective, various chapters in the book showed how leaders' self-regulation is instrumental in the development of trust, cohesion, team resilience, morale, and influence. In the area of trust, leaders' ability to influence their attitudes and direct their behavior toward developing competence, demonstrating good values, and a genuine caring for members gives them credibility and the opportunity to develop positive relationships that foster trust. Trust bonds in leader-follower relationships assist in the development of cohesion within the team. Leaders with good self-regulation abilities are more likely to set high standards, focus on building team competence through tough training, communicate in a clear and open manner, create a safe climate that promotes learning, and work cooperatively, which bolsters team resilience, morale, and general well-being.[17] Finally, leaders' ability to control their thoughts, emotions, and behavior facilitates the development of their power bases—expert and referent—related to the person. High levels of expert and referent power enhance leaders' credibility and build trust, which allows leaders to engage in transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles.

Self-Motivation

Self-motivated leaders and followers are able to marshal their internal resources to drive action in the face of risk and/or to persist toward a goal when faced with challenges. Self-motivation is intricately linked to the individual's self-regulation and efficacy beliefs. Leaders' and followers' beliefs about their ability to control their thoughts, feelings, and behavior influence their intentional attempts to self-regulate. Similarly, leaders and followers who expect or believe they can perform a required behavior to achieve a goal are more likely to engage and persist in the specific goal-directed behavior.[18] Self-regulation and self-efficacy are thus important internal sources of motivation that are developed through realistic training, education, and reflective thought.

Remaining true to one's identity and core values is another especially important internal source of self-motivation. The more centrally integrated a person's core values are with his or her self-identity, the stronger the internal force to act in ways congruent with the values and identity, thus preserving the concept of self.[19] As the integration of core values into the identity develops, the sources influencing behavior shift from external to internal,

and actions become more consistently values-based and authentic. Individuals behave in a consistently moral and ethical manner because that is who they are. The desire to stay true to core values and identity is the wellspring of motivation to strengthen an individual's will to persevere and prevail.

The desire to survive and to uphold team members' commitment to shared trust is also a powerful internal motivating force that influences behavior in dangerous contexts. The will to survive can motivate an individual to engage in behaviors up to the point of taking another human's life in service to his or her country or society. A person's commitment to fulfilling the trust that teammates have placed in him or her acts as a powerful motivational force. Studies conducted in combat zones found survival and upholding trust with their unit to be two primary sources of motivation that get soldiers to fight.[20]

Development and autonomy are two other powerful sources of internal motivation for people operating in dangerous contexts. Leaders who thoroughly train their followers and provide them with opportunities to develop their own skills and abilities (e.g., formal schools, online education programs, additional duties) enhance their followers' internal motivation to continue to serve in the organization. Likewise, leaders who give their followers the autonomy to fulfill their job responsibilities and take disciplined initiative to leverage opportunities or mitigate threats also enhance members' internal motivation to achieve the mission and stay with the organization. When leaders couple development of potential and work autonomy with serving a higher purpose, they are putting into practice the self-determination theory of motivation.[21] These internal motivational forces bolster people's motivation to persevere through adversity to achieve the mission.

Social Awareness and Connection to Others

Social awareness is an individual's realization that relationships with others play a key role in personal development and that certain attributes help to build positive connections with others. Uplifting relationships with important others (family, mentors, teachers, coaches, and so on) assist in the development of core value and beliefs, discovering and creating identity, learning moral and ethical decision making, understanding and making meaning from experience, and determining one's purpose and direction in life.[22]

To harness the developmental potential of positive relationships with others, one must be able to demonstrate respect, empathy, compassion, transcendence of self-interest, and trust of others.[23] Regarding respect, it is important that an individual recognize that other people have the right to hold different values, beliefs, and cultural practices and that one must, without giving up one's beliefs, show others due respect for their perspectives. Showing respect to others' worldviews opens the door to relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Moreover, empathy—the ability to see the world through another person's lens and understand that person's life situations, needs, goals, motivations, and potential feelings—affects one's ability to demonstrate respect and also facilitates the establishment of cooperative relationships. Compassion—being moved to assist others in reducing

suffering or improving themselves by providing support—communicates care that facilitates the establishment of positive relationships.

An individual's ability to transcend self-interest to work cooperatively for the good of all in the relationship also facilitates the development of trust. Transcendence of self-interests is important because it empowers leaders and followers to serve or strive to achieve something greater than themselves. Exhibiting selfless behavior in relationships reassures all parties involved that the common good will be served, which promotes reciprocation and trust. Furthermore, one's willingness to trust others and to be vulnerable to others' actions communicates intent to deepen the relationship and initiates the trust-building cycle. After an individual extends trust, others will feel a psychological pressure to reciprocate in kind.[24]

Network efficacy—positive connections with others—is critical for personal development and social resilience.[25] A robust and diverse social network can assist one in solving work and personal problems and obtaining feedback; such networks provide a safe forum to share thoughts and feelings, obtain different perspectives to make meaning, and benefit from career coaching. Such connections and support help reduce stress, promote resilience, facilitate meaning making, promote post-traumatic growth, and mitigate symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

Social support networks can also serve as powerful motivational forces to encourage leaders and followers to behave in a courageous and honorable manner. Senior leaders and peers who model behavior consistent with the organization's values communicate that the individual is expected to behave in the same way. In these situations, support from others provides external pressure that is congruent with and amplifies internal motivation to behave consistent with one's value and identity.

The bonds that unite people in social networks are based on trust. Leaders' and followers' credibility (competence, character, and caring), the quality of the cooperative relationships they build, and the supportiveness of the organization's culture and systems influence the development of trust. Social efficacy also helps to develop positive relationships and contributes to the development of trust.[26] Trust enhances the forging of social bonds, team viability, perceptions of collective efficacy, and organizational resilience needed to meet the psychological and social challenges associated with dangerous situations.

Relationships based on trust provide leaders with the opportunity to exercise higher levels of influence associated with transformational, servant, and authentic leadership, which all require followers to open themselves up significantly to the personal influence of the leader. Strong bonds of trust in leader-follower relationships promote morale, esprit de corps, and growth from adversity while mitigating post-traumatic stress symptoms. Therefore, leaders' and followers' abilities to build relationships based on trust determines the level of perceived support, the level of influence they can exercise, and the viability of the group.

Organization and Societal Cultures

Leaders' and followers' development is influenced at multiple levels: individual self-development, relationship networks, and organization cultures. Group memberships have a significant effect on development by influencing individuals' worldview and relationships. Most people's worldviews were shaped by their families, philosophical or faith groups, schools, teams, communities, and society. Groups possess, communicate, and hold members accountable to a set of common values, norms, assumptions about how to operate and function, collective identity, and purpose—that is, culture.[27]

Living and working in various organizational cultures creates social realities that influence leaders' perceptions of what is right and wrong, what values they should lead and live by, how to treat each other, what provides work and life meaning, and what noble purposes to pursue. Organizations' cultures can reinforce a person's values, identity, truths about the world, meaning, and purpose as well as broaden their perspective. On the other hand, organizational cultures can also have a detrimental impact on one's core values, identity, and perspective.

Leaders can leverage the organization's culture to assist in shaping and reinforcing the development of each member's worldview and the psychological attributes that support it (see figure 23.1). The organization's core values and purpose must be clearly articulated and communicated to all the members of the organization. The purpose should be of a high enough order to motivate members to transcend their self-interests. When given the option, people tend to seek out and serve in groups whose values and purpose are congruent with their own, or at least represent what they want to become.

The organization's vision statement clarifies its culture. The vision communicates a compelling future state the organization is moving toward to accomplish its purpose; it communicates hope and stirs passion. Regardless of the diversity of the organization, the culture is the cornerstone that unites members together in a common purpose and a shared belief system to which they commit to hold themselves and others accountable. Thus, culture is a powerful mechanism to exercise influence and is also a force that can unite people (cohesion) in a worthy quest.

Role-modeling is a powerful way to communicate an organization's culture. Leaders and new group members should embody the organization's core values and their belief in the core purpose and vision. Formal leaders act as role models when they ensure that the organization's espoused values are enacted within the organization. Also, these role models play a significant part in assisting group members in making meaning regarding core values, purpose, vision, their roles, and experiences.

Reviews of the organization's policies, procedures, processes, practices, systems, and structures (P4S2s) are necessary to ensure that espoused values, norms, purpose, and vision are being communicated accurately and that the way the organization conducts business aligns with them. A review of the organization's espoused values and perceived values in practice is a good place for leaders to start to identify gaps, because P4S2s tend

to take on a life of their own. Leaders should review each of the P4S2s and ask whether each is needed and whether it supports the espoused culture. For instance, if teamwork is one of the organization's core values and it is customary practice to evaluate and reward members only on individual performance, then the organization's systems are hindering the practice of this value by not including team-level goals as part of each individual's performance review.

Impact on individual development. An organization's culture has a tremendous impact on individuals' preparation and development to meet the unique challenges of operating in a dangerous environment. Organizations that value learning and development allocate necessary resources such as time, money, quality people, facilities, and equipment to conduct realistic training and education to ensure every member is prepared to perform his or her duties in the face of danger. After each training or educational event, the organization should conduct formal after-action reviews (AARs) to facilitate learning and decide how to improve in the future. A safe climate where people feel comfortable having honest conversations regarding their performance and ways to improve is key to learning.[28] The investment in development and learning bolsters members' internal motivation and self-efficacy, which contributes to effective performance, helps manage stress, and promotes resilience.

An organization's values can provide members with a reinforced moral compass to raise awareness of individual responsibility, determine what is right, and act in a moral and ethical manner. These values, along with the organization's purpose, influence the development of members' identities and provide a source from which to draw strength during adversity. The organization's values and purpose also shape members' meaning making and attitudes about seeking help. Organizations that view seeking behavioral health as an adaptive means to maintain the human system (center of gravity) and not as a weakness promote resiliency that can mitigate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress. People are the essence of every organization, and ensuring their well-being is an investment in the organization's source of strength and its future.

Organizations that value open communication and empower members promote individual agency, commitment, and efficacy. Open communications allow for mutual influence, leverage the collective wisdom of the team, facilitate learning, allow for the expression of concern (especially for moral and ethical issues), promote shared meaning making, and provide members with a sense of control. Empowerment gives members the agency to make or influence decisions to adapt to dynamic situations and use their full array of talents. Both open communication and empowerment influence the development of trust at the individual and collective levels.

Impact on relationships. An organization's culture and P4S2s impact the development of relationships within and outside it. If the organization's culture entails values such as loyalty, teamwork, integrity, selfless service, and duty, its people are likely to cooperate to achieve a common purpose that enhances the development of positive relationships.

Likewise, P4S2s that encourage fairness and open and honest communication promote the development of relationships. Rewards and performance evaluation systems can also have a pervasive influence on the development of relationships in organizations. If the systems recognize, assess, and reward cooperative behavior and collective and individual achievement, relationships based on trust will flourish. Organizations that recognize, assess, and reward only individual achievements hinder the development of cooperative relationships (see chapter 10).

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR DANGEROUS-CONTEXT ORGANIZATIONS

The holistic development model can also be used for developing organizations to operate in dangerous contexts. The focal point for development simply changes from individual to organization. The power of the model lies in its ability to provide leaders with a common framework to think about organization development, a common language to discuss development, and, most important, specific targets for purposeful development. Below is a brief discussion on how to apply the model to an organization.

Worldview

The organization's culture entails its core values and beliefs, assumptions about the world, norms governing how to interact, truths, and purpose. An organization's culture is the lens through which it perceives itself and the world. Leaders who invest time and effort in shaping and developing their organizations' culture are leveraging an immensely powerful source of influence.

Self-Awareness

It is not enough for an organization's members to be able to rattle off its mission statement; they need to understand and internalize its deeper meaning. Unfortunately, while most organizations have mission statements and espouse particular values, they rarely have an articulated ideology that gets at the practical nature of the organization. For example, members of an infantry organization may know that their primary mission on the battlefield is to "close with and destroy the enemy," and perhaps their values include integrity and honor, but these are very abstract concepts to most people. It is not difficult to imagine a young infantry soldier fresh from basic training struggling to square that amorphous command with what he or she is expected to actually do. Members who can explore their organization's ideology can understand its standards: what is acceptable, what is not acceptable, how they should behave. Leaders and followers who explore an organization's core ideology together can reflect on its purpose, mission, core values, and vision and form a shared meaning of them. Organizations explore and promulgate their ideology in a variety of ways. For example, the 75th Ranger Regiment conducts an annual "Ranger Rendezvous" where past and present members of the unit come together to celebrate their shared history and ideology.

Most organizations that regularly operate in high-risk contexts conduct formal AARs after major events to allow members to reflect on their performance and make recommendations to improve the organization for the future. Also, periodic review of policies, procedures, practices, and systems through an organization inspection program allows leaders to ensure that these structures are synchronized with espoused values, purpose, and vision.

Agency

As with individual agency, organizational agency involves the belief that the organization can control its destiny and a commitment to proactively engage in activities to do so. Collective efficacy beliefs are at the heart of agency. Members of the group must believe they have the skills, means, autonomy, and leadership necessary to adapt to a changing world. Organizations that invest in development, education, and training of its members are bolstering collective efficacy. Organizations that empower their people to exercise discipline initiative to take advantage of opportunities or mitigate threats enhance collective agency. Also, participative, transparent strategic planning practices assist the organization in identifying its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. An awareness of the changing environment allows leaders to develop and execute plans to ensure the organization is viable in the future, which boosts agency and collective efficacy.

Self-Regulation

At the collective level, self-regulation involves culture, policies, practices, and procedures and systems to shape and control how the organization executes its role and purpose. The art is to develop organizational structures that empower individuals but at the same time shape common thought patterns and behavior. Leaders who engage in valued-based leadership, open communications, and shared meaning making assist in shaping how the organization perseveres in accomplishing its mission and how it reacts emotionally to adversity. Leaders can draw on the organization's values and purpose to assist members in understanding and making meaning out of experiences. Communicating the hard facts and how the organization would adapt and be successful in the future assists in developing resilience and optimism.

Self-Motivation

The organization's core values and purpose serve as important motivation sources that govern collective behavior. The desire to maintain consistency with their collective and individual identities drives members to behave consistently with the organization's values and purpose. Collective efficacy beliefs are also a powerful motivating force governing members' pursuit of organization's goals.

Social Awareness and Connection with Others

Organizations need to develop in their culture the attributes of respect, empathy, compassion, transcendence of self-interests, and trust in others to form positive relationships

within the parent organization, the community they serve, or the countries where they operate. Feedback from outside constituents provides information organizations can use to further enhance their effectiveness. Also, an individual organization can leverage outside organizational networks to provide necessary support to accomplish a mission.

Social Cultures and Contexts

The culture of the parent organization, and to some extent the cultures of constituent organizations, can influence the culture of a subordinate organization. The parent organization has a considerable influence on a suborganization's core values and beliefs, collective identity, purpose, norms governing behavior, and assumptions. Furthermore, the parent organization usually has policies, procedures, practices, and systems to ensure subordinate organizations share similar espoused cultures. Leaders have the responsibility and opportunity to ensure the espoused culture is the culture in practice and to extend the culture. Constituent organizations can also impact an organization's culture. For instance, an organization conducting major operations overseas that forecasts its intent to continue to do so in the future might want to change its selection, training, rewards, and evaluation systems to reflect the importance of culture competence.

The holistic development model gives leaders a common framework and language to help prepare individuals and organizations to meet the unique challenges of operating in dangerous contexts. This holistic approach centers development on the individuals' and organizations' worldviews. The model illustrates developmental targets, the supporting psychological attributes, states, capabilities, and the primary targets of social influence.

It is important to note that societal and organizational cultures can have a powerful influence on the shaping of one's worldview and on the importance the individual places on the supporting psychological components of the model. For instance, a person from a collective society is likely to have core values and assumptions about the world that subordinate the individual's interest in order to support cooperative interaction with others. Also, this person is likely to place a greater emphasis on the social awareness and connection with others supporting component of the model to gain information in the forming of one's identity. The power of this model is that it is holistic and universal.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Leading in dangerous contexts is a demanding and ever-evolving process because we operate in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. Every operation is different, and we sometimes find ourselves in situations we have not trained for (e.g., airplanes used as bombs in a terrorist attack, standing up a country after its army is defeated, leading a response to a pandemic). Leaders who operate in dangerous contexts need to be open to adaptation and creative in solving unexpected challenges. Cultivating a learning mindset and empowering followers to share their ideas and exercise disciplined initiative enhances the ability of an organization to adapt.[29]

LEVELS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	TEMPORAL PHASES OF OPERATIONS		
	PREPARATION	EXECUTION	RECOVERY
Individual	• Gain and maintain technical, tactical, and operational expertise • Maintain a high level of physical fitness • Develop and practice self-management skills (e.g., control emotions and behavior) in day-to-day activities and training • Build social awareness and interpersonal skills to read and manage others' emotional states and needs through day-to-day practices and feedback from others • Develop a broad repertoire of leadership skills, techniques, and styles through reflection and self-study, training, education, and development • Master stress management strategies in day-to-day activities and training • Increase self-awareness regarding values, professional identity, purpose, vision, and worldview through reflection exercises on purpose, values, and life vision and self-study • Accept the possibility of injury and/or death in the execution of your duties through reflection and discussion with close others • Hone ethical decision-making skills under conditions of uncertainty and high stress, resolving ethical dilemmas in training scenarios, and processing afterward • Establish your ethical boundaries or "lines in the sand" that you will not violate, place them in writing, and review periodically • Build and role-model courage, optimism, confidence, and caring by seeking role models and purposefully enacting in day-to-day behavior • Be open to and engage in continuous learning (e.g., self-study, input from others, daily self-AARs, etc.) • Build and role-model effective coping strategies and resilience skills through observing your own role models, self-study, and discussion with peers • Build and maintain a diverse social support network both at work and in the community	• Lead in an ethical, authentic, and empowering manner • Determine the best leadership style to use based on the situation • Effectively monitor and manage your thoughts, emotions, and behavior to role-model calmness, optimism, etc. • Expect things to change, monitor the evolving context, and adapt effectively to the new circumstances • Maintain self-discipline regarding eating, sleeping, hydration, hygiene, and fitness during continuous operations to sustain effectiveness • Maintain a positive and open mindset • Conduct periodic internal in-process reviews (IPRs) to learn and adjust throughout the operation • Seek social support, if needed • Assist others who need social support	• Reflect on and identify lessons you learned about knowledge, skills, abilities, attributes (KSAAs) and/or perspective by conducting a personal AAR • Create and execute leader development action plans to address KSAAs needing improvement identified in the personal debrief/AAR • Reflect on the event(s) to understand your experiences and find meaning • Assist others who need social support • Rehabilitate any physical or psychological injuries • Reestablish physical fitness, sleep, and eating routines • Seek social support and/or mental health experts, if needed

FIGURE 23.2. Summary of Best Practices to Meet the Unique Challenges of Leading in Dangerous Contexts

LEVELS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	TEMPORAL PHASES OF OPERATIONS		
	PREPARATION	EXECUTION	RECOVERY
Interpersonal	• Earn credibility and build trusting relationships with team members and key internal and external stakeholders by being competent, demonstrating good character, and taking care of members with benevolence • View all team members as existing or future leaders, each at different levels of development, and manage their development plans • Provide clear mission and leader's intent, but empower and trust your people to figure out "how" to execute their duties • Establish and practice a values-based and inclusive leadership style and get feedback from others on effectiveness • Master how to read each member's verbal and nonverbal cues to diagnosis their emotional states and needs • Be seen as approachable and open to feedback and input by asking people their opinions and seeking their feedback • Share with members the rationale for your decisions so they see how the organization's and your own values influence actions • Build resiliency and emotional regulation in others by being a role model, training self-management and resilience techniques, conducting collective meaning-making sessions, and AARs	• Influence people using an authentic, values-based, and empowering leadership and make it part of your leadership philosophy and share it with others • Use leader's intent to empower your people to figure out "how" to execute your directives and to make spontaneous on-the-ground adaptive decisions • Ensure your actions demonstrate competence, good character, and care for your people to maintain trust • Stay calm and optimistic to provide your people a source of strength—practice this on a day-to-day basis • Maintain approachability and openness by engaging in leadership by walking around (LBWA) to seek people's thoughts and feedback • Share information regarding purpose of operations, progress, and members' contributions to bolster resilience • Check in with people to ensure they are effectively managing stress	• Thank each member for their contributions to the operation • Ask individuals, on a one-to-one basis, what they did well, what they will work to improve, and how you can improve • Be present during recovery operations and AARs • Engage in mutual meaning making from the experience with your people • Ensure members cope with their experiences in a positive manner by being a role model and sharing your coping strategies • Engage in social support, as needed • Coach and mentor based on strengths and weaknesses identified during execution and update each follower's development plan

FIGURE 23.2. Summary of Best Practices to Meet the Unique Challenges of Leading in Dangerous Contexts *(continued)*

LEVELS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	TEMPORAL PHASES OF OPERATIONS		
	PREPARATION	EXECUTION	RECOVERY
Team/Organization	• Build the right team by recruiting and selecting people who believe in the organization's purpose and mission, hold similar core values, possess basic capabilities, are open to learning, and are resilient • Build resilient teams or organizations by teaching members methods to control thoughts and emotions (e.g., ABC model, gratitude reflection, etc.) • Develop team or organizational ideological, social, and task cohesion by highlighting how members' performance contributes to the purpose and mission and aligns with the core values; purposefully designing opportunities for members to be together, and ensuring all members share collective goals • Train teams on all mission-essential tasks • Ensure the training system prepares people for the dynamic and stressful nature of actual operations to bolster collective efficacy and team viability • Design training events to place leaders in positions in which they must use intuitive decision making • Train in a realistic VUCA environment where leaders must improvise to accomplish the mission with minimum personnel (e.g., one leader up drill), resources, and/or time to enhance adaptability • Conduct command post exercises with external organizations that potentially could support your task force or incident command to ensure operability (e.g., common terminology, communications, understanding of capabilities and resource needs, etc.) • Create and teach effective standard operating procedures, drills, and other action plans/scripts that can be relied on to drive behavior in times of stress and time compression • Master a deliberate and robust planning process to create effective plans in a timely manner • Rehearse your team's or organization's plans, conduct Red Teaming, and create contingency plans	• Encourage leaders to use empowering leadership to enable people to exercise discipline initiative at all levels • Execute all missions to get results with integrity while minimizing risk to life • Adapt plans as the situation changes • Maintain teams' integrity when assigning tasks • Effectively coordinate and align activities across the team • Transparently distribute information across the team to achieve shared understanding and situational awareness • Coordinate effectively with other teams or task forces • Manage the dynamic and complex social and political environments • Demonstrate leader presence at critical points and times • Visit units and members to assess morale and needs • Ensure continuous learning throughout the operation by conducting tactical pauses and/or IPRs to learn and adjust • Modulate followers' sleep, rest, and respite so they can sustain operations over time • Effectively allocate and reallocate resources as dynamic situations shift • Monitor early warnings/indicators of situational changes and implement contingency plans as needed	• Ensure the organization and each team conducts AARs for all events, learns from events, and makes organizational changes based on lessons learned • Ensure lessons learned are shared throughout the organization • Provide the time and venues for teams to collectively discuss and make meaning of their experiences • Help team members understand, make meaning from, and grow from their experiences by engaging with leaders and having chaplains or mental health professionals available • Use the event or operation to reflect on and reinforce the culture and values • Reestablish vigilance in the team to prepare for the next potential event by ensuring equipment maintenance is completed, lessons learned are incorporated into training, and SOPs are updated • Rebuild or reinforce strong social and political relationships and alliances • Update strategic plans based on lessons learned • Refit equipment, weaponry, vehicles, etc.

FIGURE 23.2. Summary of Best Practices to Meet the Unique Challenges of Leading in Dangerous Contexts *(continued)*

LEVELS WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION	TEMPORAL PHASES OF OPERATIONS		
	PREPARATION	EXECUTION	RECOVERY
Team/Organization *(continued)*	• Create adaptive decision-making systems in the team or organization • Ensure the culture reinforces core values, purpose, mission, professional ethos, and learning • Teach the team what the values "look like" in actual decisions and behaviors in both common and uncommon situations • Recognize people who have the courage to speak up, take on new initiatives, and/or make tough, unpopular decisions • Ensure policies, procedures, practices, processes, systems, and structure (P4S2s) all reinforce the professional ethos, reflect the core values, move the team/organization toward its purpose, empower people to exercise disciplined initiative to adapt, and foster the development of trust and cohesion • Establish a psychologically safe climate to foster learning by not expecting perfection, allow freedom to fail, and use mistakes in training as opportunities to learn, and focusing on solving the problem when you receive bad news versus placing blame • Create systems to ensure continuous learning in all phases of operations (e.g., tactical pauses, IPRs, Red Teaming, and AARs) and make changes to improve the organization • Establish a climate that supports seeking mental health help, if needed, and has procedures and systems for mental health support • Ensure chaplains and other mental health professionals are included as part of routine training to provide members the opportunity to build relationships with members of the mental health support team • Team members should discuss with family or other loved ones the possibility of injury or death and create a will, insurance, and investment plan • Conduct deliberate and thorough strategic planning • Create strong social and political relationships and alliances to facilitate executing the mission • Create a deliberate organizational leader development system tailored to the organization's composition and mission		

FIGURE 23.2. Summary of Best Practices to Meet the Unique Challenges of Leading in Dangerous Contexts *(continued)*

Dangerous-context leaders must also anticipate future challenges. They must stay abreast of current technology and emerging tactics but also be aware of political, social, and economic trends. For example, how will the use of robots and other forms of artificial intelligence influence future firefighting and police tactics, treating people with infectious diseases, or military tactics? Dangerous-context leaders need to anticipate how adversaries might use drones, self-driving vehicles, cyber attacks, precision munitions, lasers, electromagnetic pulse weapons, or social media to gain a competitive advantage by capitalizing on surprise, lethality, and disinformation. Dangerous-context leaders must Red Team how these technology advances might be used and how political, social, and economic situations might change in order to train their organizations and people today to successfully counter them in the future. We must be vigilant in ensuring that our organizations are ready to fulfill their missions regardless of the circumstances.

Leading in dangerous contexts is also extremely rewarding. Your organizations serve noble purposes by protecting and enhancing your communities and country. Team members know that their service matters, and that knowledge adds meaning to their work lives. Furthermore, people attracted to dangerous-context organizations tend to have personal values that align with the organizations' values, so service tends to be part of their individual purpose. Thus, you have the privilege of leading and working with good people.

The team of authors who contributed to this volume hope it has furthered your understanding of the unique challenges associated with leading in dangerous contexts and best practices to effectively manage them. We challenge you to take one insight or tool and apply it to enhance your effectiveness as a leader or operator. We are honored by the opportunity to contribute to your development. Thank you for your service. Please continue to lead the way.

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